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# OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

## PART I

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WORLD'S ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

VOLUME VII

# OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

## PART I

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# OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

PART I

## I

### THE VALUE OF A CULTURAL BACKGROUND

During the nineteenth century English visitors to the United States considered it their duty to point out the crudities in American life. When they returned to England they published their impressions. Perhaps the most famous of these reflections were Mrs. Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* and Dickens's *American Notes*. Both writers were amazed at the American disregard of social traditions and the lack of culture among the politically prominent and commercially successful leaders of the new Republic. The egotism of the New World and the desire for prosperity seemed to them the outstanding characteristics of the citizens of the United States. In no measured terms they ridiculed this attitude of judging position by the amount of bluster a man made or his accumulation of material goods.

Some years later Matthew Arnold, in his *Discourses in America,* endeavored to remedy this

situation by preaching his doctrine of sweetness and light. He stressed the value of a knowledge of the civilization of the past as the basis for a well-ordered life. A person who devotes his attention exclusively to a single aim is likely to become narrow. Everyone should endeavor to increase his intelligence by giving his attention to every study which fosters the growth of the intellect. Arnold urged his audiences "to know the best which has been thought and said in the world."

Matthew Arnold's admonitions were soon forgotten because of the great advance in natural prosperity at the beginning of the twentieth century. The registration in the colleges increased greatly, but the students demanded a practical rather than a cultural education. They wished to learn how to make a living. Many graduates of high schools debated whether four years spent in gaining experience in some profitable industry would not insure greater success than four years in college. The self-made industrial leader was held up as the example to be followed. Financial importance meant success. Knowing how to earn a living was given preference to knowing how to live.

This view of life has produced the Dodsworths and Tinkers of modern fiction. To-day American writers have succeeded Mrs. Trollope and Dickens in showing how exclusive attention to

the accumulation of wealth results in a narrow, restricted point of view. When Dodsworth and Tinker saw the famous works of art in Europe, they judged them upon the basis of their monetary value. When they listened to conversations on literature, music, and art, they were bewildered, for the names meant nothing to them. They could talk about the manufacture and merchandising of automobiles or buttons, but even in the realm of politics and current events they were beyond their depth. In the business world of competition they lived and moved and had their being. Other worlds were entirely closed to them. Sinclair Lewis and Booth Tarkington have given us exaggerated pictures of these plutocrats let loose in Europe; yet their characterizations are essentially accurate. The business man thinks he has no time for culture. It is enough if he fills his library with handsomely bound volumes of the classics, which he never opens. He has attained the semblance of culture without the essence.

At times, however, successful men who have been denied the benefits of a cultural background have realized the value of such a training. In his autobiography, *My Memories of Eighty Years,* Chauncey Depew wrote:

"In connection with this I may add that, as it has been my lot in the peculiar position which I have occupied for more than half a century as

counsel and adviser for a great corporation and its creators and the many successful men of business who have surrounded them, I have learned to know how men who have been denied in their youth the opportunities for education feel when they are in possession of fortunes, and the world seems at their feet. Then they painfully recognize their limitations, then they know their weaknesses, then they understand that there are things which money cannot buy, and that there are gratifications and triumphs which no fortune can secure. The one lament of all those men has been: 'Oh, if I had been educated! I would sacrifice all that I have to obtain the opportunities of the college, to be able to sustain not only conversation and discussion with the educated men with whom I come in contact, but competent also to enjoy what I see is a delight to them beyond anything which I know.' ''

The primary value of a cultural background is that it gives one a wider outlook upon life. We are not born into a new world. Our present civilization is built upon the civilization of the past centuries, which has been recorded by works of art and literature, the concrete expressions of the thoughts and ideas of mankind through the ages. Man's struggle to acquire a satisfying existence has been influenced by many varied factors. No one line of conduct has been pursued consistently and persistently. To understand life,

then, we must have a knowledge of these different attempts and their success or failure because life is a complex pattern into the formation of which many strands have been woven.

The cultured man also acquires a sense of form. Whenever he obtains a new idea or learns some fact, he is able to discern its relationship to what he already knows. His mind is not a storehouse of unrelated knowledge, where he deposits stray pieces of educational furniture with the thought that sometime in the future he may need one piece or another to fill a vacant space in the room of his conversation. On the contrary, his mind is like a great Gothic Cathedral, each detail of which adds to the symmetry and grandeur of the whole structure. He has control of his mental powers and uses them to make his life more adequate. He has acquired a sense of conduct based upon a definite philosophy of life.

Perhaps the most important benefit from a cultural background is the knowledge of human nature which it gives. Since man is a gregarious animal, he must adapt himself to living contentedly with his fellows. He must take into consideration their ideas and endeavor to understand their points of view. To-day the necessity for understanding others is greater than ever before, because the world has become so much smaller that we are brought into closer contact

not only with the different sections of our own country but also with the various nations and races. World peace depends largely upon a better understanding of the views of our neighbors. The more we know about them, the less likely are we to quarrel with them. By a study of their national characteristics as expressed in their cultures we can learn the reasons for their views. An adequate knowledge of human nature is most valuable to any man, no matter what his occupation or social position may be.

Considering these benefits derived from a cultural background, we may define the cultured man as one who knows how the present civilization has reached its development and also understands the relationship of the various branches of knowledge to each other and to life as a whole. In this age of specialization he should know everything about some chosen occupation or profession and something about everything. He must be broad as well as deep.

If culture consists partly in a knowledge of how civilization has reached its present development, then a study of literature is one of the chief means of acquiring culture. Literature is a record of the thoughts and feelings of our predecessors and contemporaries in the world. It is the intensification and clarification of the experience of the human race by those possessing unusual insight and power. Its masterpieces ex-

press the ideas and ideals of humanity during the ages. Authors have been particularly gifted men, who have seen more clearly and felt more deeply than their fellow men. They have understood what their age has been striving to accomplish and have been able to express that ideal for their generation.

Literature touches life at all points, for it presents a cross-section of the society of a period. It brings back the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome; it revives the spirit of the Middle Ages; and it reveals the trend of modern thought. The function of literature is to hold a mirror up to nature and to interpret the reflection to mankind. Literature brings us knowledge and gives us inspiration. It fosters the imagination, for as we read, we forget our immediate surroundings and live in the times about which the author writes. Thus through literature we live vicariously and learn from the experiences of others what we could never learn from our own constricted lives. Lack of time and means prevents us from discovering for ourselves much that we should like to experience.

Emerson emphasized the value of literature as a guide to culture. He said: "Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civilized countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the re-

sults of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruptions, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age."

A consideration of the thoughts of others stimulates our own thinking. We endeavor to foresee the consequences of a certain action upon the part of the characters in a novel or biography. We try to solve the problems presented by the author or to determine the outcome of the story. We wonder what we should do were we placed in a similar situation. After a time we become critical in our attitude and pass judgment upon the plausibility of events, the truth in character portrayal, and the accuracy of expression. Literature provides material for thought by recalling to the mind truths we have already discovered and by presenting new ideas to us. The business man who reads good literature will find that his brain is on the alert. He will become less and less dependent upon the opinions of others, for he will have acquired a store of information upon which to base his judgment and a method by which he may solve his problems. Education is merely training the mind to do individual thinking, a rare accomplishment characterizing the leaders of a people.

To be of their greatest value ideas must be

given forceful expression. Often a man hesitates to express his thoughts because he lacks adequate words to convey his meaning. He fails to impress others because he cannot express himself clearly and precisely. Again literature will be an aid to him. Constant communion with the masters of style will give him a feeling for words. He will increase his vocabulary and develop a style of his own so that he will never be at a loss for words to express his opinions simply and directly. In reading, a person should cultivate the habit of noticing words and should endeavor to determine their effectiveness. Everyone admires a good talker, for he is entertaining as well as informative.

Finally, literature offers a source of recreation for leisure hours. If a person enjoys reading, he need never want for amusement. He has at his beck and call entertainers of every type and nationality. In his more serious moments he can command the services of the historian, the essayist, and the poet. When he is in a lighter mood, the teller of stories, the novelist, and the dramatist will help him to forget his worries. The biographer and the critic will appeal to a mood between two extremes. A tired business man can find a book for every mood and every need. Literature offers him a portrayal of life felt intensely and interpreted understandingly.

Therefore, a man who has a cultural back-

ground obtained largely through a study of literature will understand life more thoroughly and enjoy it more fully. He will be able to live more peaceably with his fellow men because he will understand more clearly their characters and desires.

He will acquire a wider outlook and a deeper vision. He can escape from his daily routine and wander at will in the realms of his imagination. In this age of intensive specialization a man will find that he must estimate the value of a cultural background not in dollars and cents but in terms of that more enduring form of wealth which makes life worth living—true happiness.

## II

### THE LETTER

THE letter is the only form of composition which everyone has written; yet few persons write good letters. They hesitate to put down their intimate thoughts or fail to consider the interests of the persons to whom they are writing. Consequently most letters are dry chronicles of more or less unimportant occurrences without enlivening comment. Too many personal letters are written as tho they were business communications carefully composed so as to produce a desired effect. The personal letter should be a presentation of personal affairs and ideas to an interested correspondent. Stevenson indicated the lack of restraint which should characterize personal letters. "I begin to see the whole scheme of letter-writing; you sit down and pour out an equable stream of twaddle." The successful letter-writer informs his correspondent of his doings and chats easily, as tho his friend were present.

Such letters are most diverting reading because they reveal the characters of both the writer and his correspondent. As they are not written for publication, they permit the reader to gain some conception of the intimate life of

the writer. Famous men have not hesitated to express to their intimate friends opinions which they would never have revealed to the general public. Thus we may look behind the scenes and listen to gossip, indiscretions, and revelations not meant for our ears.

The letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero are a veritable social and political history of the last days of the Roman Republic. At this period Cicero was an active politician striving to defend the Republic from its numerous enemies. By nature and training he was a conservative and a member of the aristocratic party headed by Pompey. Yet he admired Cæsar as a man and hoped by an attitude of moderation to reconcile these leaders. This attitude caused him to be suspected by both parties; consequently the opponents of Cæsar did not confide in him. He expressed his regret in a letter to Cassius beginning, "Oh that you had invited me to that glorious feast you exhibited on the ides of March!" and warned the aristocratic party against Antony, whom he called "the plunger."

The most entertaining of the letters were written to Cicero's friend Atticus, a wealthy patron of the arts, who lived in Greece for twenty years. The letters reveal the true character of Cicero, for he said, "I speak to you as I do to myself." We must, however, remember in reading them that they reflect the feelings of

the moment and are not the result of careful consideration. Cicero rails against the dulness of provincial life, commiserates himself upon his exile from Rome, describes the affairs of the Republic, divulges his opinions of the leaders, and bemoans his financial difficulties.

Cicero's family letters indicate that his married life was not a happy one. His letters to his wife are most artificial in tone; they sound like the efforts of an orator to move an audience. A growing coldness of tone becomes apparent in the later letters, for his wife was not concerned with the ambitions of her husband. Finally Cicero divorced her after thirty-two years and married his young ward. His son, Marcus, also caused him considerable worry. The boy was enjoying wild parties in Athens and spending money lavishly rather than attending to his studies. It is interesting to note that in Rome of 50 B. C. the problem of "these wild young people" was troubling the elders. Cicero gives the boy good advice and admonishes him to prepare himself for a successful career. Twentieth century fathers will find in these letters some excellent hints for their boys at college. Cicero's daughter, Tullia, seems to have been a most admirable girl from the references to her. Possibly she was the only person he really loved.

The style of the letters is essentially oratorical, with frequent exaggerations of sentiment to

secure an effect. Thus he writes effusively to his wife, Terentia, when he is in exile. "But I must lay down my pen a few moments. My tears flow too fast to suffer me to proceed." Scattered through the letters are Greek words and quotations from Latin and Greek authors. Occasionally Cicero lapsed into colloquial expressions and a lighter tone, but he rarely forgot his training as a rhetorician. His letters were a model for the golden age of the art of letter-writing in eighteenth-century France and England.

Because of their inclusion in the canon of the *New Testament,* the letters of St. Paul have attained a wider general recognition than those of any other classical letter-writer. St. Paul was the most learned of the early leaders of the church, and hence became the expositor of Christianity. He did for the teachings of Christ what Plato did for the teachings of Socrates. Neither of these great teachers committed any of his views to writing. It was left for their followers to interpret the words of their masters and to build up from these words a definite system of philosophy. Paul's success and popularity made him the authority to which the early churches turned when they met the difficulties of dissension within and persecution without. He advised them and admonished them to stedfastness in the faith. He encouraged them by giving accounts of his own sufferings and held out the

promise of eternal life to the faithful. He warned them against false teachers, who were trying to cause trouble in the congregations, for he knew the faithful would be able to withstand oppression only by unity and a spirit of brotherly love. His use of the balanced sentence and climax makes his style epigrammatic and extremely quotable.

Another classical letter-writer, who has gained fame because of his detailed descriptions of Roman life, is Pliny the Younger. As the adopted son of Pliny the Elder, he occupied an enviable position in Roman society. In his eighteenth year occurred the eruption of Vesuvius, which he vividly described in one of his letters. He was exceedingly conceited and never missed an opportunity to show his intellectual attainments, his coolness in danger, and his ability to manage his affairs. He delighted to narrate his daily doings on his estates as tho every minor act must be of supreme interest to his correspondent. When he was military tribune in Syria, he wrote a famous letter to the Emperor Trajan, asking how he should treat the accusations against the Christians. Since Pliny wrote the letters in a polished style, he clearly intended them for publication. Nevertheless, they are a valuable source for the social life of an educated man of refined tastes during the best days of the Roman Empire.

Two women ushered in the golden age of letter-writing. They were Madame de Sévigné in France and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in England. Madame de Sévigné had received an excellent education at a time when women were supposed to have little ability for intellectual pursuits. At eighteen she married and had a son and daughter before her faithless husband was killed in a duel. She had little regard for her son but was devoted to her daughter, who was apparently very much annoyed by the mother's excessive attentions. This daughter, Françoise Marguerite, married the Comte de Grignan and went to Provence, where her husband was Lieutenant-Governor. The majority of Madame de Sévigné's 1079 letters informed the Comtesse in a gay, witty, and exuberant style of the happenings at the court of Louis XIV. Because of her charming personality and brilliant conversation she was an intimate friend of most of the distinguished persons of her time. Anecdotes and gossip concerning them enliven her letters. She reveled in details and loved to keep her reader in suspense by animated teasing. The keynote of her letters is found in her remark about a famous engagement: "What glorious matter for talk!"

Like Madame de Sévigné, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu contracted an unhappy marriage with an attractive but tantalizing husband, from

whom she later separated. Her letters may be divided into two groups, those written when she went to Constantinople with her husband and those commenting on the books her daughter sent her while she was living on the Continent. On her travels and during her stay in Turkey, Lady Mary observed accurately the customs of the people. She noted particularly the differences from the English point of view. As her purpose was to avail herself of every opportunity for entertaining her friends, her lively, clear descriptions of her first impressions of the places she visited give us an excellent picture of the hardships and methods of traveling in the eighteenth century. Her frank wit and keen sense of humor also helped to make her reputation as the most renowned English woman of her day. In her later letters her critical ability is evident, for she made shrewd comments on the early English novels.

Perhaps the most famous letters written during the eighteenth century are those of Lord Chesterfield. After two years at Cambridge, Chesterfield had taken the grand tour of Europe. He came home fired with the ambition to shine in society by means of a diplomatic career. In his schemes for political preferment he failed, because he had the fatal habit of paying court to the wrong person. His attempt to appease the neglected Johnson by praising the *Dictionary* in

two papers in one of the periodicals of the day met with a dignified rebuff. In spite of his failure to attain the position he desired, Chesterfield was not discouraged. If he could not be the "ideal statesman and ideal polished man of society," his illegitimate son should be. In the letters, written to the boy while he was touring Europe under the care of a tutor, Chesterfield advised him in the arts and subterfuges of diplomacy, gave him instruction in every subject from the correct manner of walking across a ball-room floor to the proper style for a document of state, and preached a thoroughly pagan philosophy of self-advancement. This philosophy was derived largely from the works of Voltaire, which Chesterfield had introduced to England. He warned the boy to conceal his feelings by assuming a calm indifference, no matter what might happen. Advocating such a philosophy, it is not strange that the letters should show no personal affection, but be merely "what one man of the world would write to another." They are pedantic and didactic in tone; they often sound like lectures on etiquette or conduct. Yet they contain an enormous number of pertinent sentences showing Chesterfield's penetrating knowledge of human nature. Dr. Johnson's comment on his volume of letters, "Take out the immorality, and it should be put into the hands of every

young gentleman," applies as well to-day as in the eighteenth century.

Besides the letter to Chesterfield, Dr. Johnson wrote many letters worth reading. Even in his friendly notes his customary dignity and sternness are evident. Johnson was essentially a moral philosopher; he, therefore, seized every opportunity to enunciate a moral truth.

The most delightful of English letter-writers in this century was Horace Walpole. As the son of a famous prime minister he had an entrée to diplomatic and social circles. He had no desire to be a participant in affairs but was satisfied to be merely an observer. Since he hated dulness, he cultivated the art of finding pleasure in doing as he pleased. Because of this characteristic he has been considered a dilettante; yet he industriously pursued each interest as long as it lasted. He was a collector not only of news but also of gossip. His letters give us a minute and realistic record of the intrigues and accomplishments of a distinctly social age, with its artificiality and cynicism.

The peace of rustic life in the eighteenth century is revealed in the letters of William Cowper, the English poet and hymn-writer. Cowper had retired to the country on account of ill health. The apparently unimportant events of a quiet existence become most entertaining in his simply

written letters. He wrote to please himself, with no concern as to effect.

The change from the ease and satisfaction of the eighteenth century to the problems and speculations of the nineteenth is reflected in the more serious tone assumed by the letter-writers. Reflections upon conditions replace the gossipy anecdotes. Charles Lamb may be considered the connecting link between the two periods. His letters are filled with nonsense and humorous exaggerations. Yet he often discusses his opinions with the famous literary men of the period, who were charmed by his winning personality. By reading these letters we can recreate that famous circle.

Some of the writers of the nineteenth century corresponded with each other or with members of their families concerning the principles of their craft. They drew illustrations of their points from the works of their predecessors and even explained and criticized their own works. They were concerned with the general state of literature as a reflection of the cultural standards of their times. These letter-writers may be roughly classified into two groups, those who believed that literature should be subjective, that is, based upon and expressing their personal experiences and feelings, and those who believed that the writer should be objective, an observer of the life about him. The most famous corre-

spondence resulting from this controversy was that of George Sand and Gustave Flaubert. Sand had retired to Nohant after an exciting career, which she had reproduced in her novels; Flaubert was living on his estate at Croisset, toiling to express perfectly his ideas. She was an optimist with a philosophy based upon the resigned acceptance of fortune or misfortune as it came. He was a pessimist grumbling against the cruelty of existence. She advocated writing from the heart; he from the mind. The letters supply us with an excellent exposition of the differences between the romantic and realistic schools of writing.

John Keats's letters to his family not only discuss the progress of his work but also present his longing for a life of sensations. These letters should be read for a more complete understanding of his poetry, since they contain the same qualities.

Another exceptionally interesting collection of family letters are those written by Matthew Arnold. In his early letters to his mother he tells how he spends his days, comments upon the people he meets, bemoans the fact that he must fulfil his duties as inspector of schools by writing reports when he would much rather be writing poetry, and discusses his own poetry with remarkable fairness. Later he wrote to his children descriptions of his travels and accounts of the re-

ception given to his lectures in America. The Arnold family must have been a most congenial one, for these letters show a spirit of mutual regard and affection.

The Russian authors of the last half of the nineteenth century felt the need of raising the cultural standard of the Russian people. Thus they took their work most seriously. Anton Chekhov preached culture and stressed the necessity for a writer to be objective with the aim of depicting truth. In his letters to his cousin, Countess Alexandrine, Tolstoy, the Russian philosopher and novelist, enunciated his theories and confessed his personal struggles. He once said, "My best biography is to be found in my letters to Alexandrine." Maxim Gorky's letters are generally retrospective upon modern Russia, but they give us some very keen judgments of his contemporaries, particularly of Tolstoy.

One of the most difficult tasks confronting the letter-writer is to adapt himself perfectly to the circumstances of his reader. Too often he becomes so engrossed in his own affairs that he fails to remember the position of his correspondent. This failure is very likely to occur when one is writing to children. C. L. Dodgson, who under the pen name of Lewis Carroll wrote that delightful children's book, *Alice in Wonderland,* often formed friendships with his young acquaintances by sending them a copy of *Alice*

accompanied by a short letter. In an amusing and graceful manner he called to their attention some incident of his meeting with them. Another writer who understood childhood because he always retained his boyish enthusiasm was Theodore Roosevelt. His *Letters to His Children* show how thoroughly he entered their lives and how perfectly he could adapt himself to their point of view.

In the realm of adult letter-writing this power of adaptation is eminently shown in the letters of Abraham Lincoln and Robert Louis Stevenson. Lincoln's simplicity, sincerity, and ability to find the appropriate word for the occasion constitute the secret of his success as a letter-writer. Whether he was sympathizing with a bereaved mother or explaining his policy to an opponent, he wrote directly and effectively. Stevenson also adapted his style to the position and circumstances of his correspondent. He had the ability to describe vividly his experiences on his travels. In striking language he set before his readers in a humorous and sometimes ironic tone his reflections upon life in the South Seas.

The reader will also find much of interest and value in numerous other letters besides those considered in the foregoing pages, provided he has some knowledge of the writers and the age in which the letters were written. As letters are intimate chronicles of experiences and feelings,

they offer more enjoyment to the person acquainted with the lives of the writers than to the casual reader. The letters of Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, Benjamin Franklin, Voltaire, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, Edward Fitzgerald, Thomas Carlyle, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, James Russell Lowell, Alfred Tennyson, and the Brownings may be recommended in addition to the more famous collections discussed in this chapter.

## III

### BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

From the time of Plutarch to the time of Ludwig, biography has held its place as a most popular form of reading. It gives us the opportunity of becoming acquainted with adventurous spirits, who have seemed to accomplish miracles. We like to know, moreover, how a person has met his difficulties, how he has molded circumstances by the force of his personality, how he has gained his position in the world, and how he has reacted toward others. The reader feels encouraged when he learns that others have had problems similar to his own.

A good biography presents a man as he lived. It is neither a eulogy nor an indictment. It recounts both good and bad actions, giving a fair, unbiased view, so that we may know the subject as he was. It should also show his relationship to his surroundings, for a man's attitude toward life is greatly influenced by his environment. Many men have reached eminence because they were able to recognize the opportunities offered them by particular circumstances. A good biography reveals a man's personality by chronicling his minor actions, the minute details of his daily life, anecdotes about

nim, clever or apt sayings, his likes and dislikes. Seldom is a man's true personality shown in the great achievements of his career. How he conducts himself with his family and most intimate friends marks the type of man he really is.

If a man would be entirely frank about himself, he could write his own biography better than anyone else. Yet an autobiography is likely to be more distorted than a biography, for in writing his own life a person endeavors to make a favorable impression. He desires that the world shall know him as a courageous man, a shrewd business man, or some other enviable type. Therefore, he conceals some facts and exaggerates others. Yet by this very method he reveals to his readers his true character.

The hardest task confronting a biographer is that of selection of material. He must exercise rare judgment so that he will not omit any essential facts yet will not clutter his work with insignificant details. After he has spent years in collecting material about his subject, his judgment is likely to be warped. If he is not extremely careful, he will produce a dry chronicle useful for reference but not entertaining for reading. Instead of giving a clear portrait of his subject, he will leave in the reader's mind a confused picture. Biographies and autobiographies, then, should be judged by the ability of

their authors to make their subjects live before the eyes of the reader.

The most famous biographer of Greek literature is Plutarch, who aimed to teach a moral lesson by writing the lives of illustrious Greeks and Romans. His *Parallel Lives* are character sketches of analogous figures, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, Alexander and Cæsar. He makes no attempt to analyze his subjects or account for their actions. Rather he has given us a series of dramatic incidents about men active in public life. He was a Bœotian, who had studied philosophy in Athens and had later lectured in Rome. Hence, through his understanding of both civilizations, he was able to present accurately the contrasting attitudes of his subjects toward life. He quotes from authorities, includes anecdotes, relates gossip, interprets dreams and portents, explains origins of various customs, and occasionally digresses into philosophical discussions. Since Shakespeare obtained a large part of his information concerning Cæsar, Brutus, Antony, and his other Greek and Roman characters from Sir Thomas North's translation, Plutarch's portrayal of these figures has given many of us our notions concerning them. In the seventeenth century Dryden supervised another translation, which was later revised by Arthur Hugh Clough. The *Lives* have thus always enjoyed popularity with English readers.

The *Confessions of St. Augustine* is the outstanding biography in Latin literature. After a worldly youth, Augustine was converted to Christianity through the influence of his mother, Monica. In his autobiography he regrets his misspent youth and pays tribute to the saving power of Christianity. At times he bores his readers with theological discussions, but his accounts of the struggles of the early Christians are wonderfully vivid.

The spirit of adventure and intrigue dominating the Italian Renaissance forms the main thread of the *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini.* By profession Cellini was a goldsmith and sculptor, whose masterpiece, *Perseus,* may still be seen in Florence. Among his patrons were Pope Clement VII, Francis I of France, and Duke Cosimo de Medici. Yet Cellini was always in difficulty, for by avocation he was an adventurer. In an astonishingly frank manner he tells us about his trials, triumphs, jealousies, plots, and revenges. He seems to have fought most of the men of the time and to have loved all the women he had the fortune to meet. He bragged about his conquests as a lover; he exaggerated his prowess as a man of arms; he acclaimed himself as a great artist. He was high-strung and impetuous, acting upon the impulse of the moment. But the *Autobiography* is more than a record of his experiences. It is a colorful

picture of the life of sixteenth-century Italy, for Cellini had the opportunity to learn many of the secrets of the great.

Another Italian biographer of the sixteenth century who deserves mention, not so much on account of his literary ability as because of his personal acquaintance with his subjects, is Giorgio Vasari. His *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* contains reminiscences of the great artists who worked during the Italian Renaissance, and comments upon their works. Robert Browning derived from this work information for some of the poems in his *Men and Women.*

The eighteenth-century biographies were generally written to explain how, by their distinctive personalities, the subjects came to occupy their respective positions in the life of their times. In reading these biographies we watch the personalities develop as they are influenced by circumstances. In England, James Boswell had attached himself to the great literary dictator, Samuel Johnson, with the avowed purpose of writing the life of this important figure. Johnson was aware of this purpose and supplied Boswell with facts concerning his early life. At times he was probably annoyed by Boswell's somewhat irritating questions, but he tolerated his biographer and even was amused by Boswell's schemes to arouse him. The biography,

resulting from Boswell's perseverance and passion for accurately preserving life, emphasizes Dr. Johnson's wide knowledge by recording his conversations. When Boswell wrote, "To me his conversation seems more admirable than his writing," he indicated the main characteristic of his work. The reader should learn Dr. Johnson's views from his own lips. *The Life of Samuel Johnson* is a complete, accurate, impartial, and intimate account of the relationship of the lexicographer to the famous group gathered about him.

In 1781 Dr. Johnson was asked to write the *Lives of the Poets.* Many of his poets are unimportant in the history of English letters, but Johnson knew them personally and felt kindly toward them. The lives are the most readable of Johnson's works, because in them his style is at its best. He is recalling interesting stories about friends of his early, struggling days, rather than seeking to teach a moral. Augustine Birrell said, "For sensible men the world offers no better reading than *The Lives of the Poets.*"

In his *Autobiography,* Benjamin Franklin explains for the benefit of his son how he gained success in the various ventures of his early life. In a letter to a friend he said that he hoped the biography "would be of use to young readers, exemplifying the effects of prudent and imprudent conduct in the commencement of a life

of business." He tells about his industry in his profession of printing, his errors and temptations, his plans for the welfare of Philadelphia, and his habit of drawing lessons from his experiences. Franklin's philosophy was a practical one reflecting his common sense. Unfortunately, he concluded his *Autobiography* with the year 1757; therefore we do not have his reactions to the part he played in the Revolution and the early days of the American Republic. The book, nevertheless, is one that every American boy should read.

The great literary figure of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. His *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*) discloses the influences which molded his life and provided him with material for his books. As he was inclined to be rather impressionable and somewhat romantic, he had a series of affecting love affairs, which he fondly narrates. But *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is more than merely a record of Goethe's personal affairs; it is a history of eighteenth-century literature and thought in Germany as a background for her greatest man of letters. The opinions of the elderly Goethe are recorded in *Conversations with Eckermann,* who was a kind of Boswell to Goethe. Eckermann, however, lacked Boswell's ability and failed to make his

hero a living personality. His Goethe is rather a venerable oracle.

During the nineteenth century biographies increased in popularity, until to-day several have reached the rank of best sellers. Every prominent person has written his reminiscences or has been the subject for a life. New estimates of historical figures have brought them down from their pedestals and humanized them. We may become familiar with the careers of authors, artists, musicians, scientists, scholars, professional men, religious leaders, politicians, statesmen, warriors, and successful captains of industry or society. Many of these books have little literary value; a few of them, however, have qualities of style or interpretation which distinguish them.

John Gibson Lockhart's monumental *Life of Sir Walter Scott* is practically an edition of Scott's diaries and letters by a devoted son-in-law, who had the ability to comprehend the emotions which actuated the Scotch novelist. George Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay* has been called a "perfect interweaving of biography and history." Other notable biographies of literary men and women are John Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens,* Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë,* Hamlin Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border,* William H. Hudson's *Far Away and Long Ago,* Emil Ludwig's *Goethe,* Mark Twain's *Autobiography,* I. L. Tolstoy's *Reminiscences of*

*Tolstoy,* Anthony Trollope's *Autobiography,* Sidney Lee's *Life of William Shakespeare,* Cardinal Newman's *Apologia,* Amy Lowell's *Life of John Keats,* Lewis Browne's *That Man Heine,* and P. B. Wyndham Lewis's *François Villon.* Two popular fictionized biographies are Maurois's *Ariel,* based on Shelley's life, and Mrs. Barrington's *Glorious Apollo,* a vivid portrait of Byron.

Biographies of men active in political life are frequently complete histories of their periods, because of their dominating influence upon events. As a result of his researches while he was ambassador to Spain, Washington Irving wrote *The Life and Voyages of Columbus.* This book and the *Life of Washington* are distinguished more by Irving's literary charm than by their historical value. Thomas Carlyle, on the other hand, applies his keen insight to the interpretation of the attitude of his heroes toward the times in which they lived. He wrote biography upon the formula that "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." He had the ability to show how an apparently insignificant detail might be the turning point in a career. His *Frederick the Great* emphasizes so strongly Frederick's patriotism that it was used as a text-book in the military schools of Germany. His *Oliver Cromwell* is a vindication of the leader of the commonwealth.

Lord Charnwood's *Lincoln* and *Roosevelt* should be widely read by Americans, for the author has explained the English attitude toward the policies of these two Presidents. Furthermore, he has shown an excellent understanding of the men themselves. It is well for us to have such an unbiased estimate of our outstanding figures. Senator Albert J. Beveridge's unfinished *Life of Abraham Lincoln* and Carl Sandburg's *The Prairie Years* are two recent estimates of the Great Emancipator from an American point of view.

Emil Ludwig, André Maurois, and G. Lytton Strachey have subjected several famous historical figures to the new biographical method of stressing the dominating motives, often selfish ones, which have determined actions. Hence these figures have become far more human and interesting than they were in the older life-and-letters form of biography. Ludwig has chosen *Napoleon* and *Bismarck;* Maurois, *Disraeli;* and Strachey, *Queen Victoria* and *Elizabeth and Essex.* In *Aspects of Biography,* Maurois discusses the characteristics of modern biography, showing that the purpose of the author in this informal method is to explain accurately the character of his subject.

From the biographies of men of science, two may be chosen as representative. They are Huxley's *Autobiography* and René Vallery-Radot's

*Life of Pasteur.* To both might be applied a sentence from a criticism of the latter: "This is a biography for young men of science, and for others who may wish to learn what science has done, and may do, for humanity."

Biographies of business men have in general little literary value. They either stress the marvelous rise of some poor boy to a position of prominence or expose the methods by which a leader has gained control of some industry. Perhaps the most popular representative of this class of biography is *The Americanization of Edward Bok,* an autobiography, which proclaims Bok's success and points out the opportunities in modern America for an industrious, observing youth. In *Twice Thirty* Bok further explains the lessons derived from his experience. Since advertising is one of the most potent forces in modern business, the story of the development of an advertising executive as told in Ernest Elmo Calkins's *Louder, Please,* should be of general interest.

It is appropriate to close this chapter on biography with brief mention of *The Education of Henry Adams,* since Adams reviews the tendencies in modern life. As a member of an important Boston family he received the usual cultural education. After graduation from Harvard, he turned his attention to history and produced a remarkably sympathetic study of the

Middle Ages in *Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres.* A comparison of the unity in the life of the Middle Ages with the complexity in modern life led him to the conclusion that his formal education had been a failure. *The Education of Henry Adams* not only explains how he acquired an understanding of life, but also gives a most intelligent discussion of the trend of the times.

## IV

### DIARIES AND MEMOIRS

Diaries and books of memoirs may be distinguished from biographies by their more intimate tone. They deal with personal affairs and opinions concerning events or contemporaries. They record insignificant trifles in an amusing manner, for they give the spontaneous reflections of the moment. The diary is a silent confidant, to whom the secrets of the heart may be divulged without fear of having them revealed, unless the writer decides to leave his diary for posterity. Hence the diarist is not constrained by self-consciousness. He records the indiscretions of himself or others; he comments upon his associates; he lays bare his own personality. As the writer concentrates upon his own doings, a diary is likely to reflect egotism and vanity. When one is continuously setting down his daily actions as tho they were of great moment, he cannot help but impress his work with an air of conceit.

To write a satisfactory diary a person must have extraordinary perseverance, because he must not allow a day to pass without its entry. A diary which is written up spasmodically lacks the vigor and freshness of one written daily.

What is vitally significant to-day may be forgotten in a week. A diary should record current impressions, not pondered opinions.

The writer of memoirs is not so frank as the diarist, but he is just as personal. He is endeavoring to recall incidents which will throw light on the characters of famous persons whom he has known. He describes diverting situations and recalls bits of gossip. Whenever possible, he recreates the scenes of the past, reliving the moments he has spent in entertaining company. Naturally, his work is full of anecdotes, clever repartee, and astounding revelations. Distance has lent a particular glamor to his former experiences.

Sir Arthur Ponsonby is an authority on the art of diary-writing. In three volumes he has described with representative selections English, Scotch, and Irish diaries, written by men of all professions and stations in life. Among the most notable are John Evelyn, the secretary of the Royal Society and friend of Pepys; John Wesley, the founder of Methodism; Fanny Burney, an eighteenth-century novelist, who was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Charlotte; Henry Crabb Robinson, a most voluminous writer of literary *Reminiscences* as well as of his *Diaries*, which covered the years 1811-1867; and Fulke Greville, who, as clerk of the privy council from

1821-1859, knew many political and social secrets of his day.

But the English diary which surpasses all diaries in its interest and lively style is that of Samuel Pepys. During the first nine years of Charles II's reign (1660-1669) Pepys noted down valuable information about affairs of state gained from his position in the navy office, descriptions of the plague and great fire, the prices he paid for food and clothing, the current gossip, his opinions about the Restoration plays, his love for music, his attentions to pretty women, his quarrels with his wife, and his sundry decisions to reform his way of life. The people, the pleasures, the business, and the most intimate details concerning Restoration life are the subjects of a pen which knew no reticence. Pepys found the world a gay place of unexpected adventure, too entertaining to be allowed to pass without due commemoration. He also was blessed with a quaint humor, which enlivens his pages. He could laugh at his own follies as well as at those of his friends. Thanks to Pepys, we can reconstruct a picture of daily life in the reign of Charles II, even to what was eaten and drunk.

Jonathan Swift's *Journal to Stella,* a series of daily letters to Esther Johnson, does in a much less detailed fashion for the early years of the eighteenth century what Pepys did for

the Restoration. It contains characterizations of his political and literary acquaintances, accounts of petty intrigues, and trifles of gossip. Swift shows his devotion by his solicitous inquiries concerning Esther's occupations and by his use of "little language." The *Journal* reveals the more human and affectionate side of the great satirist.

The French have always had considerable renown as writers of particularly frank memoirs. These have often been a defense of the writers' own actions during periods of political disturbances, or somewhat vicious attacks on their enemies by exposing them to ridicule. Cardinal de Retz explained his opposition to Richelieu and Mazarin. Even tho he was harassed by imprisonment and enormous debts, he struggled against circumstances like a hero of the classical drama. The portrayal of this dramatic struggle raises his *Memoirs* above the level of numerous similar books in seventeenth-century French literature.

The brilliant court of Louis XIV was considered by Louis de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon a bourgeois court, for Saint-Simon always remembered that he was a peer of France descended from Charlemagne. His twenty-one volumes of *Memoirs* reflect this attitude. He is not accurate as to details, but he does paint a graphic picture of the age. The persons of the court, from

the King and Mme. de Maintenon to the least important figure, are delineated by this keen observer, who scorned much that he was forced to tolerate.

The chief quality of the most famous memoirs of eighteenth-century France is sentiment. Altho an Italian, Giacomo Casanova de Seingalt wrote in French concerning his adventures and love affairs. Casanova sought amusement in every country of Europe with no regard for conventions. He is a veritable eighteenth-century Cellini, even to his frank revelation of his escapades. Rousseau's *Confessions* is another frank presentation of "what was laudable and wicked" in his life. He had a tendency to exaggerate and sentimentalize upon his experiences, so that he frequently mingled fiction with fact. At times the reader is astonished and even disgusted at the completeness with which he bares his "inmost soul."

But the prince of French sentimentalists is François René Auguste de Chateaubriand. Wherever he went, he looked upon life with a romantic eye ever ready to be emotionally impressed. The mystery of the East, the peace of the English countryside, the glory of Niagara, and the grandeur of the American forests offered adequate material for his meditations. Throughout his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* runs a sentimental melancholy, which seems to be largely

a pose. In a colorful style with considerable dramatic quality he analyzed his emotions and philosophized upon his experiences. His romantic tendency, derived to some extent from Rousseau, exerted considerable influence upon Hugo and Byron. He felt that no one could fully appreciate his raptures or understand his sorrows.

Another French diarist, brought to the attention of English readers by Mrs. Humphry Ward's translation of selections from his *Journal Intime* (1848-1881) and by Matthew Arnold's essay, was Henri François Amiel, professor of philosophy at Geneva. Amiel expressed nostalgia for the past, mused philosophically concerning the infinite, and criticized literature and society. Arnold pointed out that the diary was more valuable for its criticism than for its philosophy.

The scandals and foibles of French literary men during the last half of the nineteenth century are exposed in the *Journal des Goncourt,* published by Edmond after the death of his brother Jules. As the brothers held a prominent position in Parisian society for a long period, and as they were members of the naturalistic school of fiction, they did not hesitate to speak plainly. The *Journal,* therefore, caused a sensation at its publication.

The outstanding writer of memoirs in German literature is the romantic poet, Heinrich

Heine. His *Traveling Sketches* and *Memoirs* are a series of impressions of the places and peoples he visited. After 1831 Heine lived in France, a more congenial country than his native Germany, for he was a "child of the French Revolution." In his *Memoirs* he cleverly burlesqued the faults and national traits he observed in his travels by exaggerating the characteristics of the various peoples. At times he became positively malignant in his satire against German conservatism. His *Memoirs* also reveal his susceptibility to the influence of women. He was extremely sensitive and suffered much from the conflict between Judaism and Hellenism in his nature.

Recently the diaries of Count Tolstoy and those of his wife have been published in English. These diaries throw considerable light upon the conflicting elements in the Russian novelist's character, especially during his unsettled youth. Countess Tolstoy bewails the indifference of her husband to his affairs and to the welfare of their children during his later years when he was devoting himself to theology. Apparently the Russian philosopher was a hard man to live with, because he was so self-centered. We gather that he did not practise at home the doctrine of brotherly love which he preached in his stories.

For those interested in Russian life during

the nineteenth century two other diaries by less well-known authors may be mentioned. Serge Aksakov published in 1856 his *Family Chronicle,* a record of life during his childhood. A critic of Russian Literature writes concerning this diary: "It is impossible to put the narrative down after once beginning it, and I have heard of children who read it like a fairy-tale." Life in Russian towns in the forties is described by Alexander Herzen in his *Memories and Thoughts.* From 1847 until his death in 1870 Herzen lived in Paris and London, where he wrote pamphlets advocating socialism. Hence the *Memories* contains comments upon the revolutionary movements of the middle nineteenth century in Europe.

Marie Bashkirtseff's sentimental diary produced a sensation when it was published in 1887. It is written in French and shows the influence of French thought upon the imaginative mind of a young Russian girl, for Marie died at the age of twenty-four. Its pathos is most appealing.

Recently, selections from the journals of two New England writers have been edited under the titles, *The Heart of Emerson's Journals* and *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals.* These books, together with Thoreau's *Walden,* reflect the views current in nineteenth-century New England. Emerson called his journals his "Saving Banks," in which he stored thoughts as they

occurred to him for future use in his essays and addresses. Often his comments on events and acquaintances are most shrewd. Thoreau's descriptions of nature and studies of the creatures of the woods are remarkable for their accurate details. Both men were given to philosophizing, but Thoreau was the more homely philosopher.

From this consideration of a few representative diaries, it is evident that any diary, no matter what its literary value, will yield entertainment. If you try to read a diary from beginning to end, however, it soon becomes boring, because the writer is diffuse and frequently repeats opinions. Diaries should be opened haphazardly and read casually.

# V

## THE HISTORIANS

A HISTORIAN may chronicle events in a dull and uninspired manner, or he may recreate the spirit of a period with illuminating detail. He may even include hearsay and anecdotes which he has not verified. He may endeavor to determine the accuracy of his sources and to select the most reliable, or he may accept conflicting accounts and set down everything he learns, allowing the reader to choose the most plausible version. He may concern himself with campaigns and battles, with political movements, or with social developments. He may lay emphasis upon the lessons to be derived from a study of history, or he may desire to laud the glories of his nation. He may have taken active part in the story he is telling. He may, on the other hand, be a student viewing events from a distance. In the following pages we shall consider historians of every type. Those here presented, however, all have one characteristic in common: they have written their accounts in an entertaining manner.

Herodotus, "the Father of History," was born in Asia Minor in the fifth century B. C. He traveled in the Near East, Egypt, and Greece,

resided at Athens, and spent his last years in a Greek colony in Italy. Thus he was fairly well acquainted with the then-known world. Wherever he went, he asked questions concerning strange customs, and gathered stories, sometimes extremely fabulous, concerning historical events. He included even the most absurd tales in his work with the remark, "I must tell the tale as it was told to me, but I am not bound to believe it all." The most stirring event of his age was the Persian Wars, concluded shortly before he was born. The triumph of Greece over its Eastern enemy is the climax of his history. He led up to this event, however, by briefly recounting the early history of Sparta and Athens; the rise and fall of Crœsus, the rich king of Lydia; the expansion of the Persian Empire under Cyrus; Cambyses's Expedition to Egypt; and the early conquests of Darius. Then with dramatic intensity he described the invasion of Greece with the courageous stand at Marathon as the turning point. Altho Herodotus admired tremendously the courage of the Greeks, he did not hesitate to criticize them. In fact, he seemed to credit fate with an important hand in the matter. He believed that it was the will of the gods that the successful should be humbled.

The modern reader finds the digressions the most entertaining part of the history. Herodotus could never resist an impulse to explain how a

custom arose or to discourse upon natural history, of which he had rather strange notions. Egypt, with its animal worship, offered him a wonderful opportunity. He also recorded the superstitions believed by the various peoples he visited. Yet he occasionally exercised a little judgment, stating which of two or more accounts seemed to him the most plausible. He made no attempt, however, to determine the matter definitely.

Herodotus was primarily concerned with "the great and marvelous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners." Hence his style has movement and vigor. For this reason he has been called the father of narrative prose.

When Thucydides was a boy, he wept at hearing the history of Herodotus read. This interest in history resulted in his writing an account of *The Peloponnesian War*. As he was a prominent Athenian, Thucydides was made commander of seven ships during the war. He lost the battle at Amphibolus and was exiled for twenty years in accordance with the Athenian policy of so treating defeated generals or disgraced politicians.

In spite of his admiration for Herodotus, Thucydides did not follow the method of his predecessor. He strove to give accurate details and to obtain correct information concerning events in which he had not participated. He told

no weird tales, scorned legends, and wrote in a reserved and dignified style. He also had little respect for divinations and consultations of oracles. If a man failed, his failure was due to his own lack of judgment rather than to fate. As Thucydides narrated what he had lived through, he occasionally referred to his personal experiences. Thus in his detailed description of the plague he says that he can set down its nature as he had the disease himself.

Thucydides presented the personages of his history by reporting their speeches as accurately as possible from memory. The funeral oration of Pericles is one of the gems in the history. The reader is impressed by the logical reasoning of the speeches and does not wonder that the audiences were swayed by them. The description of the plague reveals Thucydides at his best, for he writes simply but with great pathos. The terror of the Athenians, the agonies of the sufferers, the general hopelessness, and the lack of restraint are fully set forth. Unfortunately, Thucydides had little interest in the literature and art of the Golden Age in Greece. Hence his history is not a complete picture of his age.

The period of Greek history following the Peloponnesian War was the subject of Xenophon's works. Xenophon was a farmer and sportsman from northern Attica. Attracted to Athens, he became a pupil of Socrates, whose

practical precepts he understood far better than the philosophical discussions. What he recalled of his master's teachings he set forth in his *Memorabilia, Apology,* and *Symposium.*

After the death of Socrates, Xenophon took part in the ill-fated expedition of the ten thousand to Persia. On the return march, one of much suffering and discouragement, he led the exhausted army. The *Anabasis* is an account of the expedition. Naturally, it exalts the position of the commander, who seems to have spent much time in making encouraging speeches to the troops. Another book inspired by this expedition into Persia was the *Cyropædia,* or *Education of Cyrus.* Xenophon wrote this book to show an ideal state of society under an ideal king as an example for future rulers. To prove his points he often included fictitious anecdotes about Cyrus.

On his return Xenophon continued his military service under the Spartans, who rewarded him with an estate in Elis, where he settled down to continue in the *Hellenica* the history of Thucydides. Besides his historical works, Xenophon wrote several treatises upon farming, hunting, and horsemanship. The *Œconomicus* gives instructions upon how to conduct a household and how to manage a wife. From personal observation Xenophon derived some valuable

points. The treatise is recommended to harassed husbands.

Many students have learned Greek by means of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, as they have learned Latin from the works of Cæsar. The reason for using this work as a text-book is Xenophon's simple narrative style. At times it is almost amateurish, with its rhetorical questions and conversations. Yet by his clear descriptions Xenophon brings the scenes before the reader in rapid succession.

Polybius also played an important part in history. He was an active member of the Achæan League organized to resist the Romans. In 168 B. C. he was sent to Rome for trial. There he remained for fifteen years, during which he became so thoroughly imbued with Roman ideas that he returned to his native country an ardent advocate for Roman customs. In his histories he traced the course of Roman affairs from the Punic Wars to the conquest of Greece in 146 B. C. Polybius strove for accuracy and did not hesitate to criticize other writers. He also had a tendency to draw lessons from history. For this reason and because his style lacks vigor Polybius is not very generally read to-day.

Of the Latin historians Julius Cæsar has been the most widely read and the most hated because generations of youth have struggled through the campaigns of the Gallic War. The general view

of Cæsar fails to take into account his ability as an administrator. As Governor of Gaul and dictator at Rome he ruled wisely and efficiently, ever keeping in mind the welfare of the people. His *Commentaries* give numerous evidences of this ability, for he notes carefully the customs of the tribes, the geography of the country, and the possibilities of making the conquered country profitable to the Romans. The *Commentaries* were often written during the campaigns, which are explained in detail. The dominating power of the commander is indicated by such a phrase as "Cæsar had to do everything at one moment." He desires to justify his actions both in Gaul and in Italy during the civil war. In a simple, concise style he explains so clearly his plans that the reader has no difficulty in following the movements of the army or the purpose of the commander.

During the civil war Cæsar was supported by Sallust, who had been expelled from the senate upon charges of dissolute living. Cæsar restored him to his position and sent him to Africa on a campaign against Jugurtha, King of Numidia. Sallust acquired such a large fortune while he was governor of Numidia that he was able to retire to his celebrated gardens after Cæsar's death. Here he wrote *The Conspiracy of Catiline* and *The Jugurthine War*. Sallust followed the method of Thucydides in that he placed consid-

erable emphasis upon the discussion of the society of his time. To him Cæsar was what Pericles had been to Thucydides. Naturally he exalted Cæsar, defending the latter's actions, and seizing any opportunity to prove the aristocratic party inefficient. At times the reader becomes wearied with his philosophical interpretations and moralizings, as well as with his mannerisms of style; but his striking characterizations, his terseness, and the sincerity of his efforts overbalance his faults.

The only professional historian of Latin literature was Livy, who at the age of thirty-two determined to glorify Rome by recording her *History from the Foundation of the City*. Since he published the parts of his work as he completed them, he gained a reputation in his own day. Only about one-fourth of this monumental work is extant, but from that portion we can easily see that Livy's purpose was to give his generation examples of noble and courageous living. He pointed to the past as the period of Rome's greatness.

Livy's history is a storehouse of legends, traditions, and conflicting accounts of historical events. He depended upon hearsay without taking the trouble to consult even the most available sources. Frequently he remarked about two radically different versions, "It does not greatly matter which is right." He concerned himself

little with the accuracy of details, for he was primarily interested in exalting the character of the ancient Roman. He confuses the reader in his descriptions of military operations; he repeats what he has previously told in another connection; he spends no effort in tracing causes or reflecting on circumstances; he is often dull and verbose.

Yet no book in the Latin language, with the exception of Virgil's *Æneid,* conveys to us so well the grandeur of Rome. Livy's ability to depict the emotions of his characters and the dramatic intensity of such scenes as the attack on Rome by the Gauls make the Romans live before us. We are stirred when we read about their courageous deeds and are aroused by their forceful speeches. In fact, Livy's *History* might be called an oratorical history, for the small portion we have contains over 400 speeches.

The history of the first century of the Empire is the subject of the *Histories* and *Annals* by Tacitus. These books reveal the horrors of the imperial rule and the dissoluteness of social life. Tacitus exalted the virtues, warning the care-free Romans against their disregard of the sterner qualities. His work is somewhat biased because he concentrates upon the vices of the capital of the Empire and fails to point out the efficiency of the governments in the provinces. This oversight was remedied to some extent

in the *Agricola,* an account of the province of Britain, and the *Germania,* a description of the customs of the Germans. Even in these works Tacitus pointed out how much more courageous and stalwart the Britons and Germans were than the Romans. As Tacitus had been a governor in Gaul, the *Germania* was based largely upon his own observations. He obtained the material for the *Agricola* from his father-in-law, who had subdued and organized the province of Britain. The book is a tribute to the energy and ability of this man.

Since he is a social historian, Tacitus is the most interesting of Roman historians. He wrote in a concise, epigrammatic style enlivened with many clever sayings. Furthermore, he had the ability to characterize a man by a single sentence. Thus of Tiberius he wrote: "Dissembling to the last, he hoped by false appearance to hide the decay of nature." He frequently lashed the vices of his times with harsh satire. He described Rome as "the common sink into which everything infamous and abominable flows like a torrent from all quarters of the world."

The Chronicles of the Middle Ages are for the most part mere lists of events, often with only the briefest comments. Several years were frequently passed over without entries, because only the outstanding events were considered sufficiently important to be noted. Sometimes

the chronicler was a monk with some literary ability. Then the descriptions would be more complete and more interesting. Such a book is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*

King Alfred probably wrote the best section, an account of his own reign. One of the works which King Alfred had translated into English to enlighten his people was Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* compiled from various sources by the venerable monk of Whitby in the eighth century. Much of the historical material is as accurate as the researches by Bede could make it, but he added numerous stories of the remarkable miracles of English and Irish missionaries. Bede believed these and included them, for they taught kindness and consideration.

After the year 1000, however, the monks wrote more complete records, filling in their stories with legendary material where a knowledge of exact occurrences was lacking. The most important of these for the English reader is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of Britain,* composed in the twelfth century in Latin. Geoffrey mingled fact and fiction so thoroughly that some critics have considered him a romancer rather than a historian. His stories concerning the settlement of Britain by the Trojan descendants of Æneas, the trials of such kings as Lear and Cymbeline, and the marvelous deeds of King Arthur's

knights have been rich sources for some of the noblest works in literature. The Arthurian romances and Shakespeare were indebted to this most popular history.

In the fourteenth century, Iceland was conquered by the Norse. Among those brought to the court of Norway was Sturla, the historian of the conquest. In the *Sturlunga Saga* he honored the heroes on both sides with notable impartiality and expressed the reticent and hardy spirit of his people. This book, together with Sturla's record of the reign of King Hacon of Norway, is a masterpiece of Icelandic prose.

The historian of the age of chivalry was Jean Froissart, who from his boyhood had been an enthusiast for the deeds of knighthood in battle, in the tournaments, or at the courts of love. Like Herodotus, Froissart traveled from place to place seeking information from those he met. He was a good listener and never wearied of gathering material for his history. As one of the secretaries to Queen Philippa of England, he could enjoy to his heart's content the pleasure of watching the valiant feats of arms in the gay tournaments and the bliss of writing love poetry to the beautiful ladies of the court. Furthermore, he remembered all he had heard, so that every bit of stray information which came to his ears found a place in his *Chronicles*.

The *Chronicles* contain a series of detailed

pictures of one side of life in the fourteenth century. They deal almost exclusively with the doings of knights and princes during the Hundred Years' War. Whether the courageous actions were performed by Frenchmen or Englishmen, Froissart recorded them with equal admiration. But he ignored entirely the hardships and sufferings of the lower classes, for their commonplace lives did not interest him. We hear little about the social and economic conditions which brought the uprisings of the peasants and wrought important changes in history. The book is like a gorgeous tapestry portraying the romance and adventure of a feudal age.

Philippe de Commines, the historian of the fifteenth century, held positions of trust in the courts of Charles the Bold of Burgundy and Louis XI and Louis XII of France. He carefully considered the factors and influences which were transforming Medievalism, and he looked forward to the Renaissance. He was essentially a shrewd diplomat, and his *Chronicles* of the reigns of Louis XI and Charles VIII are written from that point of view. He realized that feudalism was passing into nationalism. Hence he left the court of Burgundy for that of France. His style is somewhat rambling, owing to his tendency to generalize and to digress from the subject. Yet he is thoroughly representative of the spirit of his age. His works were a source

of inspiration to Sir Walter Scott for *Quentin Durward.*

The historians who wrote during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demand little attention from the student of literature, for their works were generally dull records of explorations or of newly established colonies. They contain valuable information, but their style is diffuse and stilted. Often these writers exaggerated for the purpose of spreading their propaganda. Thus Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana* contains his schemes of colonization, while his *History of the World* from the Creation to the end of the Macedonian Empire is largely based on inaccurate predecessors. Our Puritan forefathers delighted in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs,* a harrowing account of religious persecutions from the early days to his own time. Of all the histories written in the Elizabethan Period, Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* is the most entertaining for the modern reader. Hakluyt obtained his material for the most part from the stories told by the explorers and was able to bring to his work the adventurous spirit of these hardy sailors. John Smith's account of the colony of Virginia and William Bradford's and John Winthrop's histories of the New England colonies record the

hardships suffered by the settlers of the American continent in a plain, unadorned style.

The eighteenth century was the age of the philosophical historian, whose creed was stated by Lord Bolingbroke: "History is philosophy teaching by examples." David Hume, William Robertson, and Edward Gibbon were all widely read in their own day, but Gibbon's subject, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* and the power of his presentation have placed his work among the great histories of all times. While Gibbon was studying at Oxford, where he was disgusted with the methods of teaching, he became a Catholic. His father at once sent him to Lausanne to live in the home of a Calvinist pastor. Here he was nominally reconverted to Protestantism but actually remained throughout his life a philosophic skeptic. He again disturbed his father by falling in love with Suzanne Curchod, who later married the famous Necker. Threatened with disinheritance, he wrote, "I sighed as a lover, but obeyed as a son." On a visit to Rome in 1764 Gibbon decided to write the *Decline and Fall.* For twenty years he devoted himself to this work.

Gibbon admired greatly Tacitus, whom he took for a model. He believed history should "record the transactions of the past for the instruction of future ages." By expounding the causes and results of various incidents, history

teaches eternal truths. No period in the history of the world was so suitable for such a purpose as the last days of the Roman Empire. In an ordered, balanced, and highly Latinized style Gibbon presented to his readers a long series of magnificent panoramas from the reign of Trajan to the fall of Constantinople. Under his elaborate style there is often a touch of subtle irony as in such a sneer as "I have described the triumph of barbarism and religion." His indictment of Christianity in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters caused an enormous amount of controversy until it was discovered that he had stressed the secondary causes and passed superficially over the main fact, the life and death of Christ. Gibbon justly deserves his fame because of his insight into the reasons for the decay of Rome and because of his gorgeous style.

The philosophical historians were succeeded by the scientific historians, who attempted by thorough research to interpret accurately their chosen periods. In England there were Carlyle, Macaulay, Green, Stubbs, Milman, Grote, Bryce; in France, Guizot, Thiers, Michelet, Tocqueville; in Germany, Niebuhr, Mommsen, Ranke, Treitschke; in Russia, Karamsin; in America, Bancroft, Prescott, Parkman, Motley, Fiske. Only a few have gained a place in literature through the quality of their style; yet the general reader

will find that all of them wrote in an entertaining manner.

After five years of study at Edinburgh, Thomas Carlyle returned to his farm in Craigenputtock with his wife, the sparkling Jane Welsh. To earn a living he did hack writing, mostly translations from the German. He introduced German philosophy to England by these translations and by the lectures which he later gave in London. His theory of history is set forth in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History,* a course of lectures on great men representing the hero as divinity, prophet, poet, priest, man of letters, and king. Carlyle was antagonistic to democracy, for he believed in government by the best men. He taught, however, that these men should govern not for their own benefit but for the advancement of the masses. He was indignant at the poverty and inequality in the world. He stated that if the ruling classes neglect the divine laws of consideration for their fellow men, they will inevitably suffer the penalty.

This idea was the keynote of *The French Revolution.* Before reading Carlyle's book a person should acquaint himself with the main events of the period, for Carlyle brilliantly pictures striking episodes rather than a connected history. In a vigorous, rushing style, characterized by unusual words, striking phrases, and unique punc-

tuation, he recreates the confusion and uncertainty of a period of mobs, guillotinings, and sudden changes.

Another Scotchman, Thomas Babington Macaulay, was the direct antithesis of Carlyle, both in ideas and in style. Macaulay's memory was the wonder of his time; he read everything and apparently forgot nothing. It is said that he could repeat verbatim a large part of the Bible, besides many other works. His historical writing was his avocation, for he was an admired member of Parliament and a lawyer of distinction. His political bias as a Whig colored much that he wrote, and he overemphasized his own opinions. He was the master of paragraph development and of a lucid style, which was somewhat metallic. The results of Macaulay's indefatigable labor were his essays in the *Edinburgh Review,* starting with the *Essay on Milton* (1825), and his *History of England.* He finished only five volumes of the latter, covering the period from 1685 to 1700. The history is extremely detailed, with many illustrations to enforce his points. Often the significance of events is lost in this mass of details. Macaulay, nevertheless, has made his readers acquainted with the spirit dominant in the last years of the seventeenth century.

Many readers have gained much pleasure from John Richard Green's *Short History of the Eng-*

*lish People,* because he traces the rise of the middle class in a fascinating style. For a study of British government, William Stubbs's *The Constitutional History of England* is an authoritative work.

Henry Hart Milman devoted his studies to a *History of the Jews,* a *History of Christianity under the Empire,* and *History of Latin Christianity to the Pontificate of Nicholas V.* His works are somewhat controversial but are generally accepted as important interpretations. George Grote's *History of Greece* may also be ranked with these as a contribution of permanent value to historical writing.

In 1862 James Bryce published his *Holy Roman Empire,* which was followed twenty-six years later by *The American Commonwealth.* In the latter book he examined thoroughly the political, economic, and social institutions of the United States. His remarkable understanding of the American character fitted him for his position as Ambassador to Washington from 1907 to 1913.

The French historian, François Pierre Guillaume Guizot used his position of professor of history at the Sorbonne to advance his political ambitions. His numerous historical works were popular discussions rather than scientific expositions. Guizot's rival, Louis Adolphe Thiers, is noted for his histories of the French Revolu-

tion and the Empire, in which he sustained the Napoleonic legend.

Jules Michelet, on the other hand, considered history a science. With the temperament of a philosopher, he made generalizations from his study of causes and emphasized the importance of small incidents. His *History of France* dwells upon personal aptitudes and social movements, for Michelet had a passion for humanity. Saintsbury has called him "the most original and remarkable historian in point of style that France has ever produced."

Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to study our prisons but extended his study to include all American institutions. He became so enthusiastic that he held up America as the ideal democracy in his *Democracy in America.* He used the experience of America as an object lesson for Europe and particularly for France.

The German school of historians may be characterized by their devotion to the study of origins as a historical method. Berthold Georg Niebuhr, the leader of this school, wrote a *Roman History.* He scorned all non-scientific historians and made some extremely caustic remarks about Livy's method. He was followed by Theodor Mommsen, who also took Rome as his subject for investigation; Leopold von Ranke, who devoted his attention to the history of Southern Europe and Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth cen-

turies; Heinrich von Treitschke, the leader of the Prussian school, whose *German History in the Nineteenth Century* inspired an intense spirit of nationalism by exalting the power of the state.

The Russian historian, Nicolai Michaelovich Karamsin, so influenced his period, 1790-1820, that it is sometimes called after him. A student of the English Sterne and Richardson and the French Rousseau, Karamsin was a sentimentalist. His *History of the Russian State* in ten volumes became at once a classic, for it opened the eyes of the Russians to the great deeds of their forefathers by appealing to their feelings. A German critic designates Karamsin as "the first Russian man of letters of genuine cultural influence on the entire reading world." This eulogy is probably more appropriate to his *Letters of a Russian Traveler,* giving his impressions of Germany, Switzerland, Paris, and London, than to his history.

The nineteenth century was the period of great territorial and industrial expansion in the United States. As the nation gained in power and the American continents became the goal of European immigrants, the historians traced this development from its beginnings. William H. Prescott devoted his attention to the romantic conquests by the early Spaniards. *The History of Ferdinand and Isabella, The Conquest of*

*Mexico,* and *The Conquest of Peru* relate the stirring events of Spanish adventure. Altho Prescott may have been inaccurate in minor details, he has told his story in a dramatic style.

The period of the French and Indian War is the subject of Francis Parkman's histories. In preparation for this task Parkman lived among the Indians and learned their customs and habits. These experiences he recorded in *The California and Oregon Trail.* In eight volumes, beginning with *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* and ending with *A Half-Century of Conflict,* he chronicled the struggle between France and England for the possession of North America. Parkman investigated original documents and has left us an accurate and vigorous account of this conflict.

The Revolution and its heroes have received most discerning treatment in John Fiske's *The War of Independence.* George Bancroft also dealt with this period and the formation of the Constitution in his *History of the United States,* as well as with the early periods of discovery and settlement. But as literary works these histories cannot compare with those of Prescott and Parkman.

There is, however, another American historian who deserves mention, altho he did not write the history of his own country. John Lothrop Motley became so interested in the courage of

the Dutch Protestants in withstanding the tyranny of Philip II of Spain that he determined to write their history. *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* and *The History of the United Netherlands* are somewhat biased in their point of view, because Motley was carried away by his sympathy for the Dutch; but their dramatic quality makes them excellent reading.

The most popular history written in the twentieth century has been H. G. Wells's *An Outline of History*. From the geological ages to the Treaty of Versailles, Wells reviews the advance of civilization, stressing those events which have greatly influenced man's position on the earth and minimizing the local and temporary incidents. In spite of the array of authorities cited in footnotes, Wells gives an individual interpretation of events. Particularly delightful are his speculations and his subtle thrusts at established reputations. His heroes are the common men rather than the leaders, whom he delights in humbling.

Every period in the world's history has been carefully investigated by the professional historians with the view of determining what actually occurred and of interpretating the influence of various movements upon the development of civilization. Some are optimistic, prophesying a better understanding among the peoples of the earth, while others sound a warn-

ing, basing their deductions upon the animosities revealed by the recent World War. All of them, however, are making a laudable attempt to evaluate the endeavors of mankind to create for himself a satisfactory state of society.

## VI

## THE PHILOSOPHERS

THE works of a few philosophers deserve to be included in a history of literature, not so much because of the system of philosophy which they expound as because of the style in which they are written. Some philosophers were masters of lucid exposition; others had the gift of facile expression; while a few possessed the poetic temperament. These thinkers have illustrated their theories with allegories or proved their contentions with appropriate stories. They have enriched literature with descriptions of social conditions and have portrayed famous characters.

The greatest teacher among the Greeks never wrote a book. Socrates preferred questioning his pupils concerning the problems of existence in an attempt to lead them to discover the truth or fallacy of their beliefs. He seldom stated his own opinions definitely, for he wished to stimulate thinking on the part of the young men who listened to him. This method aroused the teachers of the older schools of philosophy so that they accused him of destroying the belief in the gods and of corrupting the youth. They were powerful enough to have him tried and

condemned to drink the hemlock. Plato, his most noted follower, wrote a dramatic account of the attitude of Socrates at the trial. The *Apology* is, however, more than a description of the trial; it is a discussion concerning the true nature of wisdom.

After the death of Socrates, Plato traveled in Egypt, Italy, and Sicily. On his return to Athens he opened the School of the Academy, where he lectured on the theories of his teacher and developed his own theory concerning the reality of ideas. Altho Plato formulated no definite system of philosophy, his teachings in regard to the pursuit of the good and the beautiful have become the keynote of the school named after him. Professor Jowett, an English Platonist of the Victorian Age, wrote: "The germs of most ideas, even most Christian ones, are to be found in Plato."

Plato's purpose was to improve man by teaching an ethical way of life based upon the acquirement of knowledge, for "happiness results from the pursuit of virtue." Plato believed that man naturally desired the good, but through ignorance often followed the evil, because he did not know how to determine the nature of the good. In his dialogs, the most important of which are *Euthyphro, Crito, Meno, Gorgias, Symposium, Phædo, Laws,* and *Republic,* he explained such qualities as courage, duty, friendship, love,

and patience. In the *Phædo* are Plato's arguments for immortality, the subject which Socrates discussed just before he drank the hemlock. One of the finest passages in all literature is that describing the death of Socrates, with which this dialog concludes. In his attitude toward death Socrates showed his nobility of soul. The *Republic* gives Plato's notion of an ideal state—the first of a long line of Utopias. In this state the philosophers will rule justly and see that every citizen does that for which he is naturally fitted. Plato works out a complete system of education and government, so that individual freedom will be preserved. He excludes poets from his state, because they tell fictitious stories. Yet in this very dialog he increased the effectiveness of his exposition by analogies, for he was essentially a poet.

Plato's masterly handling of the difficult dialog method, his poetic diction, and the even flow of his narrative have established his place in literature.

For twenty years Aristotle, often called the Stagirite from his native city, Stagira, a Greek colony in Macedonia, listened to Plato's lectures. In type of mind the pupil was almost directly opposed to the teacher, for he had had a scientific training from his father, the court physician to the grandfather of Alexander. After Plato's death, Aristotle became tutor to the young and

headstrong Alexander, who later had specimens of plant and animal life collected from Asia for him and supplied him with funds to conduct his researches. Aristotle took all knowledge for his province and so thoroughly investigated every subject that he was to the Middle Ages the "master of those who know."

In 335 B. C. he opened his school in the Lyceum at Athens, where he lectured for twelve years on scientific, philosophical, and esthetic subjects. Only two of his works concern the student of literature. These are the *Ethics,* in which he taught that man must live a life controlled by reason to gain his desired goal of happiness; and the *Poetics,* in which he analyzed the Homeric poems and *Œdipus Rex* by Sophocles to determine the qualities of great art. He taught that the artist should imitate nature, not by giving a photographic reproduction of the subject, but by expressing the universal significance underlying it. Noble characters, deep emotions, and great actions are the materials for a great art. In the *Poetics* he laid down three important rules for the writer. The first was that the work must have unity of impression. Each event should follow naturally the preceding event and point to the conclusion. The second discussed the matter of probability of events. Plausible impossibilities, he stated, were to be preferred to improbable possibilities. Finally he enunciated

the doctrine of catharsis as applied to the drama. The drama arouses our emotions, but, by the progress of the action before us on the stage, gives us pleasurable relief. Thus through literature we have an outlet for suppressed emotions which cannot be satisfied in our daily life.

For two thousand years Aristotle's treatises were the chief text-books for the world's thinkers. Two Arabian scholars, Averroes and Avicenna, wrote voluminous commentaries upon them, and through these commentaries the master was known to the Middle Ages. To the schoolmen of the period just preceding the Renaissance, Aristotle's works were the Bible of Philosophy. According to James H. Robinson's *Mind in the Making,* we are to-day still under their influence in the study of esthetics.

Two books of practical philosophy written in Greek deserve mention because the modern reader will find many valuable suggestions in them. One contains the discourses of a Roman slave; the other the meditations of a Roman emperor. Both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius were adherents of the Stoic Philosophy, which taught duty, resignation, and self-control. Epictetus had gained his freedom some time before the year 90, for he left Rome when Domitian exiled the philosophers. At Nicropolis in Epirus he lectured on progress, contentment, tranquillity, friendship, exercise, finery in dress, and, in fact,

any subject suggested by his experiences or his observation. These lectures were taken down by his pupil Arrian and published after his death. Marcus Aurelius, worn out by the trials of the Empire, wrote the *Meditations,* which he entitled *To Himself,* to encourage and to guide him in his difficulties. He jotted down his thoughts, often in the form of commands. Gibbon characterized him as "severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfections of others, just and beneficent to all mankind."

The Romans took their philosophy from the Greeks, for they were doers rather than thinkers. After the conquest of Greece in 146 B. C., many Greek scholars gave lectures at Rome on the various systems of philosophy. When the Roman authors wrote philosophical treatises, they usually reproduced in a popular form Greek thought. Thus Cicero based his *Republic* and *Laws* upon Plato's works of the same titles. Cicero's treatment is somewhat more political, as he was a practical politician. He chose the Roman Republic in its most flourishing period as his example of the ideal state. His dialogs *On Old Age* and *On Friendship* are his most notable productions in this field. In the first, Cato answers the charges brought against old age by two of his friends with a discourse on its advantages, proving that while old age may remove us from active affairs, it compensates by

giving us wisdom and authority. In a diffuse essay Lælius explains to his two sons-in-law that true friendship depends upon mutual affection and benefits to be gained. Your friend is your other self. A third treatise, *On Offices*, is a didactic exposition of the honorable and expedient. In these books Cicero wished to show his readers how to accommodate themselves to their environments and how to accept what fortune might bring to them.

The ethical philosopher of Latin literature is Seneca. Born in Córdoba, Spain, he was brought to Rome as a boy to study oratory, philosophy, and law. After varied fortunes, including an eight years' exile in Corsica on the charge of joining in a political intrigue with the niece of the Emperor Claudius, he was appointed tutor to Nero. During the early years of his pupil's reign he held important positions and amassed a fortune. At sixty-two he retired, and three years later committed suicide at the command of the Emperor. His *Epistles to Lucilius* is a course in morality, touching every phase of life. In a concise and epigrammatic style he points out how men ought to live.

Just before the Dark Ages began, the last of the Roman philosophers was imprisoned by Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, on a charge of conspiracy. While he was in prison awaiting execution, Boethius wrote in poetry and prose the

*Consolation of Philosophy.* Philosophy appeared to him as a grave and noble lady to comfort him and admonish him. Boethius had been a devoted student of both Plato and Aristotle; so Philosophy drew her teachings from them. This book exerted an enormous influence on the Middle Ages and was one of the first books to be printed. It was translated into English by King Alfred, Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth.

The dull and massive volumes compiled by the medieval schoolmen and the humanists of the Renaissance are read only by specialists. Two sixteenth-century Italian handbooks for the politician have, however, retained their popularity. Niccolò Machiavelli dedicated *The Prince* to Lorenzo the Magnificent of Florence in the hope of regaining the political prominence he had lost when the Medicis returned to Florence in 1512. During the days of the Florentine Republic he had served on various diplomatic missions to Rome, France, and Germany. At the court of Cæsar Borgia he had noted how government by force and dissimulation insured power to the ruler. Hence he advocated that method in *The Prince.* Machiavelli's political theories were determined by the conditions of his day, for he was writing a practical guide, not an ethical treatise. Yet his underlying purpose was an admirable one. He desired to have an independent and unified Italy, freed from

foreign domination, and he believed the Medicis the logical rulers to carry out this unification. His name, however, has acquired the connotation of unscrupulousness when applied to modern politicians.

Baldassaro Castiglione was as eminently fitted to write a handbook for the courtier as Machiavelli for the politician, since he had spent most of his life at courts of popes and princes. In a witty dialog, *The Courtier,* he stated the requisites of a perfect gentleman. Many well-known contemporaries take part in the discussions. *The Courtier* was a source for the characteristics of chivalry as portrayed by Rabelais, Cervantes, Spencer, and Sidney.

At the same time in England, Sir Thomas More described an ideal social and political state in his *Utopia.* Like Machiavelli, More had experienced both the favor and disappointments of political fortune. Even more rapid than his rise to the Lord Chancellorship was his fall when he opposed the divorce of Henry VIII, who committed him to the Tower and finally had him beheaded. It is said that Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* gave him some comfort during his imprisonment. More's *Utopia* purported to be the account of a state visited by a shipwrecked sailor, who had accompanied Amerigo Vespucci on his voyages. The doctrines of More have gradually been adopted and have revolutionized

European society. The *Utopia* was written in Latin, but was soon translated into the principal European languages.

In a brief outline of literature it is possible to consider only a very few of the philosophers who have lived in the last three hundred years. Indeed, it is difficult sometimes to determine whether they belong to literature, for their importance has been due far more to their thought than to their method of presentation. They have been great thinkers, but they have expressed themselves in technical language or in an obscure style. Some, however, have been such brilliant writers or have so influenced the progress of culture that they deserve our attention. A few, like Francis Bacon and Voltaire, have written other forms of literature and will be considered in the chapters dealing with those forms.

Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, and Leibnitz in the seventeenth century mark the beginnings of modern philosophy. The rationalism of René Descartes is summed up in his famous dictum, "I think, therefore I am." The *Discourse on Method* expounded the scientific principles of logic and order. The function of philosophy was to weld the experiences and beliefs of man into a harmonious unity. This view influenced the composition of the classical French drama and freed French prose from the elaborations of the older writers. Descartes's

clarity of expression and precision made him a model for succeeding writers.

Benedict Spinoza, a Dutch philosopher of Jewish parentage, learned Latin and the philosophy of Descartes from an ex-Jesuit physician. In 1656 he was excommunicated from the synagogue because of his free thinking. While he ground lenses to earn a living, he pondered on the highest good. His *Ethics,* written in difficult Latin, furnished Lessing and Goethe in Germany and Coleridge and Wordsworth in England with material for discussion, and thus indirectly influenced literature.

The literary fame of Thomas Hobbes rests upon only one book, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil.* The theory upon which Hobbes's political philosophy is founded is that the state is supreme, demanding submission from the individual. He took a rather cynical view of humanity; in his opinion, man was always actuated by self-interest. His views of the state were the guiding principles adopted by the English Stuarts, who fully believed in the divine right of kings. Thus Hobbes was thoroughly in accord with the views of his age.

A student of the systems of Descartes and Hobbes was John Locke, who published, after nearly twenty years of labor, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* This study of

the human mind opens with a criticism of the doctrine of innate ideas and proceeds to prove that ideas are obtained from experience. Locke devotes some discussion to language as it influences thought, as well as to the types and nature of our ideas.

The philosophical theories of Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, and Locke were criticized by the German philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz. His service to literature was that he aroused his compatriots to attain a national culture after the trying period of the Thirty Years' War. His insistence upon a revival of German thought and German letters prepared the way for the golden age of German literature.

Almost every author in the eighteenth century was a potential philosopher, for it was an age of speculation. Even the novelists delayed the progress of their stories to insert philosophical discussions. The philosophers of the preceding century were followed enthusiastically or opposed violently by fundamentalists, who feared the scientific method of rationalism.

The defender of religion against the conclusions of Locke was Bishop George Berkeley. His *Principles of Human Knowledge* is one of the most lucid philosophical treatises in the English language.

The organization of society in eighteenth-century France was analyzed and severely criticized

by Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau. Charles Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu made a study of the political institutions of his native country and her neighbors, including England, where he lived for two years.

His *Persian Letters* is a satire against the faults of European society as seen by an Oriental traveler. This more serious purpose is veiled under a light and clever tone, with many references to Oriental manners. Next Montesquieu turned to Roman history, and in *Considerations upon the Causes of the Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans* drew certain generalizations concerning society. The results of his observations of conditions in his own time and his studies of the past were collected in his greatest work, *The Spirit of the Laws.* After an analysis of various constitutions Montesquieu reduced government to three types—Republic, Monarchy, and Despotism. His description of an ideal government was consulted by both republicans and constitutionalists during the French Revolution and the reestablishment of the monarchy.

The most ambitious work of French philosophy was the *Encyclopédie,* a dictionary of the sciences, arts, and trades in thirty-five volumes under the editorship of Denis Diderot. During the twenty-two years he was supervising this work, Diderot wrote philosophical and critical essays on a great range of subjects and even ventured

into the realms of drama and fiction. His philosophy was based on the theory that in Nature could be found the explanation of everything. Diderot was a fighter who expressed his opinions boldly in a lively style.

Another disciple of Nature, but of a much more sentimentalized Nature than Diderot's, was Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose works were the inspiration for the French Revolution and Romanticism. For him the ills of his time came from the restraints and inequalities of organized society. This belief is developed in a dissertation on *The Origin of the Inequality of Mankind.* He classified inequalities as natural and man-made. The natural inequalities are those of temperament and individual talent, while the man-made are those of social position. By tracing the development of society he illustrated his theory and pointed out that in modern life the rich were oppressing the poor. The *Social Contract* advocates a return to Nature, for man in a state of innocence is naturally good. In such a state man consents to be governed because the individual is made happy by the general welfare of the community. Rousseau applied his doctrine to family life in *The New Héloise,* a sentimental novel written under the influence of Richardson, and to education in *Emile.* His theory of pedagogy was based upon a consideration of the nature of the child, who should be given

an opportunity to express his individuality without restraint. In many points this theory reminds us of the various modern experiments in education.

Rousseau's influence upon the early nineteenth century was widespread, from Jefferson in America to Kant in Germany. The writers of the romantic period in European literature also found the essential ideas of their devotion to nature and common man in Rousseau's works.

The majority of nineteenth-century philosophers are too technical for our consideration. A few, like Schopenhauer, wrote excellent prose, but only one composed a literary masterpiece. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche wrote the most beautiful and lucid prose in German literature. Like Plato, he had the poetic temperament and enforced his ideas with symbolic analogies. Brought up under the care of pious but fussy women, he was shy and solitary. At eighteen he lost his religious faith and began his search for a new god. This was to be the superman, so eloquently proclaimed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* After years of loneliness and ill-health Nietzsche became insane in 1888 and finally died in 1900.

Nietzsche taught the will to power, for only by this will could the superman be evolved. He hated democracy and scorned the masses. "Man

is something that is to be surpassed." This is the refrain of *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* The guide-books for the superman are *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy of Morals,* collections of brilliantly phrased aphorisms. The superman is a man of strength and courage, who has passed beyond the usual ideas concerning good and evil. To Nietzsche was given the power of words and the persuasive eloquence of suggestion. His teaching was the inspiration for the individualism in modern European literature.

Recently Will Durant has attempted to popularize philosophy by his *Story of Philosophy* and *Mansions of Philosophy.* These books have received some criticism from the modern scholars because of their popular treatment. But for the general reader they are an adequate introduction to a somewhat difficult subject.

## VII

### THE APHORISTIC ESSAY

An essay is a prose composition of moderate length dealing with a subject in such a way as to give some indication of the author's personality. The author aims to instruct the reader or to convey his ideas with the hope of changing conditions, or he may merely desire to amuse by recollecting experiences. He treats his subject from a particular point of view and makes no attempt to discuss it completely. The appeal of the essay is primarily an intellectual one, for the essayist gives us his opinions or reflections.

An aphoristic essay is one largely composed of epigrams and maxims. In a single sentence is packed enough material for a paragraph. The concentrated style of the aphoristic essay makes it somewhat hard to read, but the effort demanded is amply repaid by the suggestive value of the thoughts.

The term essay, originally meaning a trial or endeavor, was first applied to a prose composition by Michel Eyquem, Sieur de Montaigne. In 1580 he published two volumes with this title. Montaigne's father had given him a classical education and had secured for him a position in the law courts. But as the son disliked to

exert himself, he retired at the age of thirty-eight to his estate, "weary of enduring the servitude of the law courts, and with all his faculties still alert, yielded himself to the care of the learned maidens, with them to pass, in peace and quietness, whatsoever span of life might be further allotted to him." He spent his time reading in his tower-library and meditating on how to live and how to die. The management of the estate he left to his wife. Yet Montaigne was no solitary. He enjoyed good company, especially at table, and kept open house for any travelers who might pass his way. His love of eating and his hatred of exercise soon brought the usual results, so that Montaigne was forced to travel through Italy, Switzerland, and Germany seeking health.

Montaigne's *Essays* were written to answer the question, "What do I know?" He set down in an informal style thoughts suggested by his reading or observations. He talks to us about his personal affairs, revealing frankly his enthusiasms and prejudices. Any subject may appear in his rambling discussions, from "How One Ought to Govern His Will" to "Of Thumbs." By quotations from the classics he enforces his arguments. Montaigne's three volumes of essays form a library of information to be read at leisure before the fireplace on a cold winter night, for he refuses to hurry.

The first of the English essayists was Francis Bacon, the philosopher and statesman. Bacon occupied various official positions, until he became Lord Chancellor and Viscount St. Albans in the reign of James I. In May, 1621, he was convicted on twenty-three charges of corruption and forced to retire. His political fortunes do not concern us except in so far as they gave him material for his books.

Bacon considered his essays of minor importance, for he spoke of them as "dispersed meditations." He expected that his fame would rest upon a great philosophical work, the *Instauratio Magna Scientiarum,* of which he completed only two parts, the *Advancement of Learning* and the *Novum Organum.* He opposed the accepted methods of teaching philosophy and advocated the experimental method. Important as his service to modern English philosophy has been, for every one person who has heard of his *Advancement of Learning,* a hundred are acquainted with the *Essays.*

The *Essays* fall into three groups: those on philosophical subjects, those dealing with politics, and those discussing domestic affairs. Following the legal method of weighing the pros and cons, Bacon analyzed his subjects and drew his conclusions. In a concise and epigrammatic style, characterized by the short sentence and the striking phrase, he brought out the signifi-

cance of an idea. He was fond of using Latin quotations and somewhat fanciful figures of speech to illustrate his points. The *Essays* are recommended for their excellent advice given in a terse manner.

The Elizabethan dramatist, Ben Jonson, also jotted down his thoughts on various subjects. These notes in the *Discoveries* are moral and critical in nature. Jonson lacked originality of thought, but in compactness of style he was a rival of Bacon.

In seventeenth-century France, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* and Blaise Pascal's *Thoughts* brought to a close the period of the aphoristic essay. Disappointed in his attempt to gain success as a soldier, politician, and lover, Rochefoucauld concluded that motives of self-interest actuated the conduct of all mankind. This view he expressed in over 500 witty *Maxims* ranging from a sentence to half a page in length. Two of the most characteristic are: "Men would not live long in society were they not the dupes of each other." "There may be good, but there are no pleasant, marriages."

Pascal lived a life of retirement, for he was a student by nature. His chief interest was mathematics. He invented the barometer and conceived the idea of the omnibus. French and English critics have united in praising the *Provincial Letters,* in which he attacked the Jesuits

with the weapon of polite irony. The *Thoughts*, taken from his note-books, were published by his friends after his death. One of his sentences is most suggestive for twentieth-century America. "It is dangerous to tell the people the laws are not just; for their obedience depends on the contrary belief."

After the seventeenth century the aphoristic essay as a distinct class was supplanted by other forms. Aphorisms, however, have adorned the style of many a later essayist by their pointed wisdom.

## VIII

## THE CHARACTER ESSAY AND THE PERIODICAL ESSAY

THE character essay is a description of a type, such as the idler, the student, the flatterer, the shopkeeper, the milkmaid, by the enumeration of the characteristics of that type. The originator of this form of essay was Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle at the Lyceum. From his observation of the faults of Athenian society he produced the *Moral Characters,* containing thirty sketches, each devoted to some weakness or instance of bad manners. Theophrastus first defined the fault and then described the actions of a person controlled by it.

In the seventeenth century the *Moral Characters* became very popular in England and France. The chief imitations of them are John Earle's *Microcosmography,* Thomas Overbury's *Characters of Witty Descriptions,* and Jean de La Bruyère's *Les Caractères.* These brief sketches are extremely witty, and altho they deal with the social foibles of their time, they seem very modern because their authors were students of human nature.

The periodical essay is the name used to designate the English essays which appeared origi-

nally in the eighteenth-century periodicals. On February 17, 1704, Daniel Defoe brought out the first number of his *Review,* a political journal of the Whig party. This paper, published at first weekly and later tri-weekly, contained a short essay on a serious topic, usually political but sometimes commercial. Defoe warned his readers of the greatness of France and advised England to build up her commerce. He was well qualified by experience to discuss these subjects, because he had been a wholesale dealer in hosiery, a commission merchant for wines from Spain and Portugal, an accountant, and a manufacturer of brick and tiles before he had been imprisoned in 1703 for his political pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters.* He said, "Thirteen times I have been rich and poor."

Another portion of the *Review* was devoted to "Advice from the Scandalous Club," described as "A Weekly History of Nonsense, Impertinence, Vice, and Debauchery." Later this section became known as *The Little Review.* These essays and others which Defoe contributed to various journals are at times mildly satirical in tone. As Defoe was a voluminous and hasty writer, his essays are often of small literary value and discuss insignificant and ephemeral subjects.

Undoubtedly the *Review* gave some hints to

Steele, who established the famous *Tatler* in 1709. In this year he felt keenly the necessity of increasing a never adequate income. Probably the success of the *Review* and his experience as editor of the official *London Gazette* suggested to him the possibility of appealing to the general public in a periodical devoted to any subject of current interest. For nearly two years Steele discussed frankly and cleverly the political and social questions of the day. He even made an appeal to a new class of readers by giving some attention to affairs of "the fair sex, in honour of whom," he wrote in his prospectus, "I have invented the title of this paper." Steele's purpose was to reform and educate his readers by instructing them what to think. It has been said he was suited for such a task because he had participated in so many follies. Yet many of his faults were due to his generosity and affability, which he inherited from his Irish mother. Macaulay and Thackeray were too severe in their condemnation of Steele. According to John Gay's *Present State of Wit*, Steele's writings corrected "many thousand follies" and convinced "young fellows of the value and advantages of learning."

To make his comments more effective Steele created the character of Isaac Bickerstaff, the forerunner of Sir Roger de Coverley. Addison soon recognized the identity of Bickerstaff and

offered his services to Steele. Two months after the last *Tatler* appeared, Addison and Steele started the *Spectator,* to be issued six times a week. The aim of this paper was "to establish a rational standard of conduct in morals, manners, art, and literature." A new middle class of the honest, successful merchants was beginning to attain prominence in the early years of the eighteenth century. They had not had the advantages of noble birth or education, but they were hard-working and earnest. The younger sons of the nobility, on the other hand, were too proud to work and hence had plenty of time for dissipation. The *Spectator* desired to educate one class and to reform the other.

The method employed was to scatter among critical and informative essays allegories to teach the needed lessons. But far more entertaining are the papers dealing with the experiences of the Spectator Club. Besides the quiet student of life from whom the Club took its name, the group consisted of representatives of the principal classes of society—the lawyer, the clergyman, Captain Sentry, Sir Andrew Freeport, William Honeycomb, and the genial country gentleman, Sir Roger de Coverley. The character-drawing of these types makes the *Spectator* an important predecessor of the novel.

From the precise and restrained but easy style of the *Spectator* many later writers, including

Stevenson, learned their art. Dr. Johnson's advice was that "whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

It is to be regretted that Johnson did not follow his own advice, when he wrote his papers in the *Rambler* and *Idler*, the two periodicals appearing on Tuesdays and Saturdays during 1750-1752 and 1758-1760. His essays are weighty discussions upon abstract subjects. Johnson's style lacked the lightness of touch which makes the *Spectator* papers such delightful reading. Addison and Steele pointed out social faults with a rapier, while Johnson drove home his moralistic teachings with a club. Even his attempts at humor were heavy-footed. Still, the *Rambler* and *Idler* contain some sound criticism and some excellent advice dictated by Johnson's good sense.

Of the other numerous successors and imitators of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* only one has attained a reputation almost equal to that of its models. This is Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*, a series of letters appearing in *The Public Ledger* during 1760-1761. Possibly from Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* Goldsmith obtained the idea of having a Chinese philosopher write home to his friend in Peking his impressions and criticisms of England. In addi-

tion to the genial satire of ridiculous customs, the essays reveal Goldsmith as a man of depth and originality of thought. He anticipated many of the later reforms in social, political, and economic fields. All of these ideas were conveyed in an easy style enlivened by his brisk humor. If Goldsmith were living to-day, he would be one of the most admired columnists.

The place which the periodicals occupied in the literature of the eighteenth century was taken by the magazines in the nineteenth century. Their contributors have continued to direct the thinking of the day and to suggest needed reforms. The movement started by the periodical essayists has, therefore, had an influential growth.

# IX

## THE PERSONAL ESSAY AND THE REFLECTIVE ESSAY

THE periodicals of the eighteenth century created a reading public and aroused sufficient interest in serious essays to warrant the founding of four magazines in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. *The Edinburgh Review, The Quarterly Review, Blackwood's Magazine,* and *The London Magazine* provided the essayists with media for their criticisms of literature and remarks upon the state of politics or society. *The Edinburgh Review,* founded by Sydney Smith and Francis Jeffrey, was Whig in politics and moralistic in judgment; *The Quarterly Review* was presided over by the elder Tories under the direction of Scott and Southey; and *Blackwood's,* edited by Lockhart and Wilson, gave the younger Tories an opportunity to express their views. *The London Magazine* was the only strictly literary one of the four with no political bias. In its pages appeared the work of the three outstanding essayists of the first half of the nineteenth century—Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey.

Charles Lamb, prince of the personal essayists, has told us of London life from his school

days at Christ's Hospital until the time he became "The Superannuated Man." For thirty-five years he was a clerk, first in the South Sea House and then in the India House. During these years Lamb found his recreation in writing his *Essays of Elia,* which reveal his kindness and whimsical humor. When we remember that his life was clouded by the recurrent attacks of insanity to which his sister was subject, we admire still more his cheerful tone. Every essay sparkles with his wit and charm, whether he is criticizing the Elizabethan dramatists, indulging in recollections of his earlier days, imagining what might have been, or writing mere nonsense in a delightful style. He converses with his reader amiably about his experiences, enthusiasms, and ideas. He is a royal entertainer who varies pleasant fooling with tender feeling. The "Dissertation on Roast Pig" and "Dream Children" are the masterpieces of his humor and pathos.

The majority of William Hazlitt's essays were critical and will be considered in the chapter on criticism. He did, however, write some admirable essays on general subjects, such as "The Fight" and "On Going on a Journey." He had a fighting spirit often aroused by his excessively sensitive nature. After he realized that he could never be more than a mediocre painter, he turned to literature by the road of parliamen-

tary reporting. In *Table Talk* he discusses a variety of topics in a vigorous style and gives bits of autobiographical information.

In 1821 the readers of *The London Magazine* were startled by an essay entitled *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. The essay was based upon Thomas De Quincey's marvelous dreams induced by overdoses of opium, and upon his imaginative interpretation of his experiences. Further descriptions of the effect of opium are to be found in *Suspiria de Profundis* and *Autobiographic Sketches*. The sorrows of his days at Oxford, the troubles of his wanderings in London relieved by the sympathetic Ann of Oxford Street, and the visions of the dreamer are vividly recounted in his impassioned prose. He referred to his style as "an elaborate and pompous sunset." Its chief characteristics are its rhythmical quality and its color. He endeavored to produce the effects of music. In fact, he named one of the finest sections of *The English Mail Coach*, "Dream Fugue." The great fault of this style is its diffuseness. Frequently De Quincey is so carried away by his imagination that he forgets everything but the musical cadence of his phrases. He was a magnificent dreamer oblivious of restraint.

A classicist among these romantic essayists was Walter Savage Landor. His six volumes of *Imaginary Conversations* summon from the past

well-known historical or literary figures to discourse with each other upon their views of life. Landor seldom stressed the dramatic possibilities of such a dialog as the one between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. He was primarily interested in presenting ideas. His austere prose was particularly suited to such a purpose.

The essayists of the Victorian period were essentially teachers reflecting upon the problems brought by political and industrial changes. John Ruskin, the son of a wealthy wine merchant, received every advantage of education and travel. He began his career as an interpreter of art and ended it as an economic reformer. In *Modern Painters* and *Seven Lamps of Architecture,* Ruskin developed his theory that true art is the expression of the artist's soul. He also pointed out the connection between architecture and the construction of society, for the architecture of a period is the expression of its ideals. Thus Gothic architecture expressed the aspiration of the religious devotion of the Middle Ages. The *Stones of Venice* explained the doctrine that beauty in art is due to the happiness of the workman and his opportunity to reflect his individuality in his work. Ruskin waged war against materialism because it was destroying natural beauty and standardizing life.

He derived his economic theories to some extent from Carlyle's essays. Carlyle's most origi-

nal and most characteristic work, *Sartor Resartus*, taught that "Our grand business undoubtedly is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." This teaching was a corollary of his general philosophy of clothes as developed in *Sartor Resartus*. In an economic essay, he compared the conditions under which the artisans of the Middle Ages worked with the system under modern industrialism. Once again he stressed the sacredness of work for its own sake rather than for the enrichment of the capitalist class. He did not demand charity for the worker, but "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work." Carlyle believed that industrialism by its insincerity and disregard was crushing the foundation of England's national life.

These views Ruskin advocated and developed in the essays in what he called his only true book, *Unto This Last*. The problems of commercial life, according to these essays, arose largely from the selfishness of commerce. The workers were being exploited for materialistic purposes. Their lives were being crushed because the modern system deprived them of joy in their work. Ruskin pleaded for a reorganization of commerce and a fairer attitude toward labor. He tried to persuade manufacturers to produce honest goods. His message to the worker was "Fit yourself for your place." The government was

to aid in this campaign of reform by establishing training schools, farms and workshops, and homes for the incapacitated, for "that country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings."

The other essays of Ruskin expand his ethical teachings. Some of these were directed particularly to women, notably the collection called *Ethics of the Dust;* others, like *The Crown of Wild Olive,* are of interest chiefly to men. Perhaps the three essays in *Sesame and Lilies* have the most general appeal because of the nature of the subject and the clarity of the style. Altho a variety of subjects receives attention, education is the main theme. In Ruskin's view, "Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave." When both men and women can obtain such an education, happiness will be extended to a greater number of human beings. He advocated the establishment of agencies to carry out this idea.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Robert Louis Stevenson recorded his adventures on his travels in *An Inland Voyage, Travels with a Donkey, Across the Plains,* and *The Amateur Emigrant.* In every incident he found romance, for to him the unexpected was the essence of romance. He could make his readers see the most commonplace event in a new

light because he observed more closely and felt more deeply than the casual traveler.

Stevenson was a conscious artist, ever seeking the exact word to convey his thought. He revised his essays constantly in his endeavor to produce the desired impression. Nowhere are the results of this effort better seen than in *Virginibus Puerisque,* containing some amusing comments as well as excellent advice on the subject of love and marriage. In recent years it has been the fashion to declare that Stevenson's heroic struggle in fighting tuberculosis aroused so much sympathy for him that his literary merit has been greatly overrated. He has given, however, and will continue to give his readers many hours of pleasure.

The culture of the mother country was brought to the new American Republic through the essays of Washington Irving, who spent seventeen years in Europe. After he returned to America, he lived the life of an English country gentleman upon his estate at Sunnyside. *The Sketch Book* familiarized his readers with the English countryside and English customs. Included in this collection were two narratives of the Dutch settlers of New York, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip van Winkle," immortalized upon the American stage by Joseph Jefferson. *Knickerbocker's History of New York* also dealt with the Dutch legends.

Its aim was "to embody the traditions of our city in an amusing form" and to surround it "with those imaginative and whimsical associations so seldom met with in our country, but which live like charms and spells about the cities of the Old World." Irving was a leisurely writer given to repetitions but endowed with a quaint sense of humor. As long as New York stands, his Father Knickerbocker will keep his memory alive.

As Irving endeavored to make his countrymen appreciate the Old World, so Ralph Waldo Emerson explained its thought. He was to America what Carlyle was to England. His *Representative Men* reminds one of *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. He taught the value of courage and self-reliance through his lectures and essays in the *Dial*, a periodical established by Margaret Fuller for the purpose of free discussion. Emerson was the leader of the transcendentalists, thinkers who discussed truths beyond the realm of actual experience. The titles of Emerson's essays suggest the abstract nature of their contents. Among these are "Friendship," "Compensation," "Self-Reliance," "Prudence," "Experience," and "Character." Emerson was far more tolerant of the views of others and far less egotistical than his master, Carlyle. He taught rather than scolded. The keynote of this teaching was his famous motto, "High thinking and

plain living." Emerson came from a long line of preachers, and in spite of the fact that he resigned from the Unitarian ministry, he was always a preacher.

Emerson's essays are hard to read because of their condensed style. He used the sentence as the unit of composition rather than the paragraph. Hence the reader is impressed by a single statement, but finds the theme of the essay difficult to grasp. His writing has a unity of tone rather than a unity of structure. A reader is rewarded for his labor, however, by the value of Emerson's ideas.

Another member of the New England group was an entertainer, whose essays rival Lamb's for their charm and humor. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes was one of the original contributors to the *Atlantic Monthly* when it began its career in 1857. *The Autocrat at the Breakfast-Table, The Professor at the Breakfast-Table,* and *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* are filled with entertaining conversation, witty phrases, keen observations, and striking comments on those subjects which might be discussed at a typical boarding-house. Holmes transports the reader to the breakfast-table and introduces him to the various characters so that he feels entirely at home.

The popularity and success of the magazines in the twentieth century have greatly encour-

aged essay-writing among contemporary authors. G. K. Chesterton has inherited the mantle of Ruskin, for he is an ardent medievalist, attacking modern specialization and standardization. He states his views by the method of paradox and antithesis. Like Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc is a defender of the past. He objects to H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* because it minimizes the importance of man and of religion. E. V. Lucas is the twentieth-century Charles Lamb. With a humorous and whimsical view he has written of art, travel, and the aspects of human nature. The "Incomparable Max," as Bernard Shaw has called Max Beerbohm, desires primarily to amuse. He, therefore, often neglects the important for trifles, about which he discourses in a carefully developed style.

Some one has said that the important question concerning the American essay of to-day is how to tell one writer of it from the next. They all write pleasingly, but not very seriously, about a variety of personal interests. Henry van Dyke, Samuel McChord Crothers, and Agnes Repplier represent the elder group, while Simeon Strunsky, Heywood Broun, and Christopher Morley are the exponents of the younger school of essayists.

# X

## THE SATIRICAL ESSAY AND THE CONTROVERSIAL ESSAY

THE satirical essay and the controversial essay seldom reach the rank of great literature, because they deal with current beliefs or abuses and are produced under the sway of temporary passions. A few of them, however, have outlived their age on account of the universality of their subjects or the pointedness of their style. A clever thrust at a worthy opponent always arouses admiration. The ridicule of foibles and the exposure of absurdities of any age afford us amusement even tho we feel the sting of the lash, for human nature has been essentially the same since the days of the earliest satire.

In the second century of the Christian era Lucian, a Greek born in Syria, finally settled in Athens after he had spent several years in the East. He was a skeptic, who declared that religion was superstition and philosophy mere quibbling. The *Dialogues of the Gods* attacks the adherents of the older faiths as hypocritical and insincere. The gods are shown to be ridiculous in their whims and selfish in their actions. Lucian treated famous men with no more respect. In *Dialogues of the Dead* he points out the

conceit, the irritableness, and the unimportance of the great. Only Menippus, the clever rogue, who laughs at life, has achieved any satisfaction either in this world or the next. The *Sale of the Philosophers* satirizes the different systems of philosophy by presenting their chief exponents in the slave market. This plan offers Lucian an opportunity for much witty dialog—showing the uselessness of philosophy.

The imaginative power of Lucian reminds one of Swift. *A True Story* is a forerunner of *Gulliver's Travels*. Lucian characterizes this work in his preface as being "enticing not only for the novelty of its subject, for the humor of its plan, and because I tell all kinds of lies in a plausible and specious way, but also because everything in my story is a more or less comical parody of one or another of the poets, historians, and philosophers of old, who have written much that smacks of miracles and fables." He tells how his ship was swallowed by a whale, how after nearly two weeks he and his companions escaped from the belly of the whale, how they visited strange lands, how they took a trip to the moon, and how they experienced a host of wonderful adventures. Lucian was a great parodist and humorist, commenting shrewdly upon the credulity of humanity.

The folly and stupidity of man also made a deep impression upon the Dutch humanist,

Erasmus, as he traveled about Europe in the sixteenth century. Erasmus refused to align himself definitely with any group of humanists or reformers of his day. Dominated by a spirit of moderation, he was a seeker for truth. In the acquirement of wisdom lay the solution of man's problems, but the majority blindly followed the dictates of church or state. To bring to the attention of his age its faults, Erasmus wrote *In Praise of Folly,* an attack upon every class from the theologian to the vagrant on the highway. He pointed out that the worship of folly was widespread, for her temples were in the hearts of men. The success of the book was immediate, particularly because of its virulent satire upon different ranks of the clergy. All thinkers were demanding a reform of the abuses of the church, either by a thorough reorganization or by separation as advocated in the treatises of Martin Luther. The sarcasm of *In Praise of Folly* and the *Colloquies* is as potent to-day as in the sixteenth century, for some of the follies are so ingrained in human nature that three hundred years of new learning have not eradicated them.

Another aspect of religious controversy, that between the Puritans and Churchmen in England, turned the poet John Milton from his literary pursuits for twenty years. From 1640 to 1660 he defended the Commonwealth against the attacks of the Royalists. So loyally did he

serve as Secretary of Foreign Tongues to the Council of State of the Commonwealth that he lost his eyesight. The first group of his controversial essays consists of the five Anti-Episcopal Pamphlets against the overbearing demands of the bishops of the Anglican church. Then followed the pamphlets on education, divorce, freedom of the press, the divine right of kings, and the establishment of the Commonwealth. The *Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing* has been cited again and again when the question of the freedom of the press has been paramount. The immediate cause for the writing of this plea was the petition to Parliament from the Stationers' Company, which claimed that Milton had infringed the Ordinance of 1643 by publishing his tract on divorce without the necessary authority. The main arguments in Milton's defense are that censorship does not suppress bad books because they will be circulated surreptitiously, and that censorship discourages learning because scholars will not submit to the judgment of "a few illiterate and illiberal individuals" as to what is true or false. With forceful reasoning Milton elaborated his points. His enormous learning provided him with illustrations to prove his arguments, not only in this pamphlet but also in his *Defense of the English People*. Milton's prose is extremely hard to read because he had a tendency to use long,

involved sentences and a highly Latinized diction. These qualities, however, gave it a dignity seldom equaled in literature.

A contemporary of Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, defended the faith of a physician and scientist against the criticisms upon his *Religio Medici*. To-day this book, together with his *Urn Burial,* is read more for its majestic and sonorous style than for its reconciliation of science and religion. Browne was a gentle and tolerant writer, who explained his views with no rancor against his opponents.

The leisurely defense of fishing by Isaak Walton begins with a conversation between a falconer, hunter, and angler upon the relative merits of their sports, but soon the fisherman becomes the chief speaker. *The Compleat Angler* would persuade anyone of the pleasures of fishing. For its descriptions of nature alone it is worth reading.

The most bitter of English satirists was the disappointed and dissatisfied Jonathan Swift. The last line of his epitaph, "Where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart," indicates the tone of his life and writings. Swift was indignant at the attitude of his friends; he was indignant at his appointment as Dean of St. Patrick's in Dublin; he was indignant at the treatment of Ireland by the government. Finally he railed at humanity in general with

the venom of a diseased mind. Proud and sensitive, Swift suffered at the injustice about him. Death deprived him of his beloved Stella and other close friends, leaving him alone in his last years. The Victorian writers judged him harshly because of the virulence of his satire, but he is more to be pitied.

When Swift was secretary to Sir William Temple, a controversy concerning the superiority of ancient over modern books was raging among the English scholars. *The Battle of the Books* held up to ridicule the pedantry of the classicists. Next the quarrels of the churches received Swift's attention in an allegorical satire, called, after the proverbial expression for a ridiculous story, *Tale of a Tub.* He did not confine himself very closely to his theme, but attacked the vanity of the age and kindred faults. Even the critics of the day were treated to a thorough drubbing. This book exerted considerable influence upon Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus.* In his political pamphlets, largely in defense of Ireland, Swift indulged in personalities. He did much to arouse the Irish to a sense of nationalism. Other essays, such as *A Modest Proposal* and *Directions to Servants,* flay abuses by making astounding suggestions, such as the proposal that the poverty of the Irish might be relieved by the sale of their children for food. Swift

never hesitated to speak frankly and even disgustingly when his scorn demanded it.

Swift's masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels,* is derived from the work of Lucian through the French Rabelais. Gulliver's voyages to Lilliput, the land of the pigmies; to Brobdingnag, the land of the giants; to Laputa and neighboring lands; and to the country of the Houyhnhnms, a nation of horses served by the disgusting Yahoos, have delighted generations of children because of the surprizing adventures and entertaining narrative. But Swift wrote the book to vent his scorn in an ironic tone upon the customs of England and the habits of mankind. Swift's satire was very effective, because he wrote in a pointed, precise style, with no elaborations or angry outbursts. His ridicule of the vices of society has not lost its keenness in two hundred years.

The satire of Swift was the subject of one of the essays in Thackeray's *English Humorists,* a collection of critical essays upon eighteenth-century writers. Thackeray's own vein of genial satire makes *The Four Georges,* another study of eighteenth-century society, and the *Book of Snobs* delightful reading. These rambling discourses expose the pretensions of society with characteristic wit. Thackeray hated hypocrisy and sham, two very prevalent traits of Victorian England, and he spared no efforts to strike at

them. To some extent his essays remind the reader of the character-essay of the seventeenth century, for Thackeray was a master at drawing well-known types.

Other satirists and controversialists have destroyed the permanent value of their work by narrowing its scope or by trying too hard to be clever. They belong distinctly to the minor literature of their countries and their periods. They were aroused by temporary issues and failed to make their work universal in appeal. To understand their essays it is necessary to have a comprehensive knowledge of the conditions which inspired them. Still others have chosen to ridicule earnest and sincere reformers for the sake of furnishing amusement. This is too often the fault of our modern satirists. Their attacks lose force because they are directed against efforts we must admire, no matter how much we may disagree with them. If his works are going to live, a satirist must strike at the basic prejudices and ever-present follies of human society, taking different manifestations in different ages, but stressing similar underlying traits.

## XI

## THE CRITICAL ESSAY

The literary critic analyzes a book in order to determine its value in relation to other productions of a similar nature. He then interprets the work for his readers and helps them to understand the purpose of the author. He must account for the success or failure of a work; he must acquaint his readers with its characteristics and recommend what is good. As Sainte-Beuve said, "he is the secretary of the public." He saves the public time and labor by indicating the contents of a book and by suggesting beneficial and enjoyable reading. Professor Saintsbury defines criticism as "the endeavor to find, to know, to love, to recommend not only the best, but all good that has been known and thought and written in the world. It shows how to grasp and how to enjoy." To accomplish his task successfully the critic must have read widely; he must have a real appreciation for literature; he must not be prejudiced; he must have rare good judgment; and he must be able to present his conclusions in a persuasive and entertaining manner.

In the history of criticism we may distinguish four major schools: the informational, the im-

pressionistic, the judicial, and the inspirational. The informational school states as accurately as possible both the good and bad points of a work and leaves the determination of its value to the reader. No attempt is made to give a definite place to the work. The impressionistic critic gives the personal effect of the book upon him at the time when he reads it. The personal equation is the important factor. If the reader happens to have the same type of mind as the critic, he will find the impressionistic critic a satisfactory guide. Such a critic, however, is very likely to be swayed by prejudices or temporary enthusiasms. The judicial school formulates definite standards from a comprehensive study of literature and classifies the subject under discussion according to these standards. The value of the criticism naturally depends upon the adequacy of the standards. The inspirational school thoroughly understands the author, sympathizes with him, and leads the reader to him so that a bond of communion is established between them. Sometimes in a phrase, seemingly the result of intuitive understanding, the inspirational critic will characterize an author. Such a phrase is that of Coleridge when he speaks of Shakespeare as "our myriad-minded Shakespeare."

Aristotle's theories of criticism in the *Poetics* have already been considered in the chapter on

the philosophers. The third book of his *Rhetoric* discusses the style and arrangement of a speech with considerable attention given to diction and figures of speech. Fragments of other works of Greek criticism have come down to us mainly through quotation by Latin authors, but the only important treatise after Aristotle is *On the Sublime,* generally accredited to Longinus, who lived about 250 A.D. Longinus stressed the importance of weighty thought and intense passion expressed in appropriate words. He also suggested that the author should consider what the judgment of posterity might be concerning his work. Longinus enforces his points by criticisms of selections from various Greek and Latin authors. He deserves our recognition because of these quotations, for thus he preserved some of the best of classical literature.

The most famous critical work of Latin literature is Horace's poem, *Art of Poetry.* Its fame is due to the influence it exerted upon the European critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rather than to its critical worth. Horace stated the doctrines of unity and order, discussed the use of appropriate meters, and stressed the importance of right thinking. The purpose of the poet is "either to instruct, or to delight, or to combine the two." Numerous examples from poetry and the Greek drama illustrate the principles. At least, Horace takes his

art seriously, even tho he submits it to rigid control. The poem abounds in epigrams quoted by successive generations, for Horace had the ability to state his thoughts effectively.

Among the Romans the study of rhetoric occupied a prominent place because it was the chief training for the lawyer. The Emperor Vespasian endowed a professorship in rhetoric and appointed Quintilian as the first incumbent. After twenty years of experience in teaching and in practising law he wrote a text-book on *The Training of the Orator*. He discusses the education of the orator from the earliest period throughout life, recommending a thorough foundation in general culture. He enumerates authors to be studied and comments upon their books. Hence he has left us an excellent review of Latin literature as well as some comparisons of Latin and Greek authors. For Quintilian, Cicero was the ideal orator.

The imitation of classical models and forms of composition in seventeenth and eighteenth century literature gave a new impetus to the art of criticism. The motto of the classicists was "Study the Ancients," while the modernists defended the native methods and verse forms of the sixteenth century. The leader of the classicists in France was Nicholas Boileau, whose views were derived from Horace and Longinus. His *Art of Poetry* and *Reflections upon Longi-*

*nus* laid down the rules of art as followed by the Latin authors and their French imitators, particularly Racine. The essence of these rules was formalism and standardization. In his criticisms of contemporary literature Boileau was generally just in the application of his principles. His influence was widespread until the romantic movement of the early nineteenth century rebelled against the restrictions imposed by the classical school.

Since we have already mentioned the critical nature of Ben Jonson's *Discoveries* in the chapter on the aphoristic essay, John Dryden may be considered the forerunner of the classical school in England. His critical essays were published as prefaces to his plays and poems. Altho Dryden was somewhat burdened by his adherence to rules and by his violent prejudices, he had the ability to appreciate good work. His essay on Chaucer reveals a discriminating understanding of the fourteenth-century poet. Another of his critical prefaces defended the practise of the English dramatists who wrote rimed tragedy. He sometimes was careless about facts and occasionally made rather glaring errors, but these do not seriously mar the value of his criticism. Dryden's prose style is admirable for its precision and clearness.

Boileau's influence is easily traceable in Pope's poetical *Essay on Criticism*. After describing

the attitude the critic should have, Pope enumerates the rules to guide him. One of them may still be recommended to all who assay the task of criticism:

> "A little learning is a dangerous thing;
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring."

Like his French master, Pope was the advocate of order and reason. His comments on various writers do not suggest any careful study. They are rather arbitrary.

Dr. Johnson defined literature as "the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind." The central rules of his critical code were that literature should teach unknown truths or recommend known truths. He judged works upon the basis of their moral teachings with little regard to the power of imagination. He also gave considerable attention to technique, delighting to point out mixed metaphors and ineffective constructions. At times he contradicted views formerly expressed, but he was a robust critic, for he did not hesitate to state emphatically his conclusions. His reputation as a literary dictator was so firmly established that even Goldsmith submitted to him poems to be criticized, and accepted his revisions.

The theories of Boileau came to Germany through the works of Gottsched and Lessing. By his treatise on the principles of neo-classicism,

Johann Christoph Gottsched, professor of poetry at Leipzig, engaged in a literary war with two Swiss professors of Zurich, who looked to Milton for true poetic expression. After a barrage of dull pamphlets from both sides Gottsched was defeated and superseded by the younger critics. His main service to German literature consisted in a reform of the theater. He prepared six volumes of plays for a reorganized German stage under the title, *The German Theater according to the Rules of the Ancient Greeks and Romans.*

Lessing was the leader of the revolt against the classicism of Gottsched. He drew from all sources, showing equal admiration for the theories of Aristotle and the practise of Shakespeare. He dethroned neo-classicism by going back to the fountain-head of criticism, Aristotle, and disregarding the Latin and French interpretations. The basis of his teaching was the search for truth. The *Hamburg Dramaturgy* was originally intended to consist of comments on the plays and acting of a German National Theater at Hamburg, but soon it became a means for general criticism on dramatic subjects. By his exposition of the methods of Sophocles and Shakespeare he freed the German drama from the influence of French classical drama. His *Letters on Modern Literature* had previously made a plea for the independence of German literature from foreign models.

Lessing's interest in Greek culture caused him to write *Laocoön,* a discussion of the differences between poetry and the plastic arts. The poet must deal with actions, while the painter or sculptor has for his subject "bodies with their visible properties." The aim of both is to give pleasure through the portrayal of beauty. The poet, however, lacking the materials of the painter, gives merely the effect of beauty. He suggests rather than describes in detail. Lessing expresses his ideas with remarkable clearness and eloquence. He is a master of German prose.

The successor of Lessing was August Wilhelm Schlegel, the translator of Shakespeare. His service to German Romanticism in producing a masterly translation of the great Elizabethan dramatist and in writing critical notes upon the plays cannot be exaggerated. His *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* and his *Lectures on Belles-Lettres and Art* brought him the discipleship of Mme. de Staël and the admiration of Carlyle and Coleridge. Schlegel was a comparative critic drawing his examples of romanticism largely from England.

The disciple of Schlegel introduced German Romanticism to France by her *On Germany.* The daughter of Necker and of Gibbon's first love, Mme. de Staël was brought up in the intellectual atmosphere of the French salon during the reign

of Louis XV. Her participation in the politics of the French Revolution and her opposition to Bonaparte caused her exile from France a number of times. Part of her exile she spent in Germany, where she found much to her taste in literature. Her criticism sets the standards of moral or social perfection as a means for determining the worth of a literary production. Her most important critical work, *On Literature considered in its Bearing upon Social Constitutions,* applies her theory to the literature of the South as contrasted with the literature of the North. Her conclusion, stated in *On Germany,* is that "Romantic literature alone is still capable of perfectibility, because, having its roots in our own soil, it alone can grow and gain fresh vigor; it expresses our religion; it recalls our past; it avails itself of our personal impressions by which to stir our emotions."

The romantic movement in England produced two outstanding works of criticism, Wordsworth's "Preface to the Second Edition" of *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria.* Wordsworth defended his method of writing the poems contained in *Lyrical Ballads* and explained his views of the subjects and diction suitable for poetry. In the humble, everyday life of the people he found greater truthfulness than in the heroic and unusual occurrences. The naturalness of their passions and

the reality of their experiences would have a strong appeal for the reader because he would have some knowledge of them from his own experiences. Furthermore, rural life was nearer to nature; from it Wordsworth had gained much comfort and learned many lessons. His theory of poetic diction was revolutionary, for he believed that the poet should use the ordinary language of every-day life. The language of poetry need be no different from the language of prose. The poet could express the deepest emotions in simple, unadorned diction. These doctrines guided Wordsworth to some extent in his writing of poetry, as we shall see in a later chapter.

Seventeen years after the appearance of the Preface, Coleridge discussed in the *Biographia Literaria* Wordsworth's theories. He disagreed with his friend on a number of points, stressing the fact that the composition of poetry is essentially different from that of prose. After a careful analysis of Wordsworth's poetry, Coleridge stated that most of his defects came from his adherence to his theory. Coleridge's own theory was that poetry should "lend the charm of imagination to the real and force of reality to the imaginary." The critic should "find the inner springs of life in each work of art, and so put us on the track which the artist followed in the act of creation." Other chapters of *Biographia Literaria* deal with German tran-

scendentalism and philosophy, as well as with literature, for Coleridge never resisted the temptation to digress wherever his trend of thinking might lead him.

No student of Shakespeare should neglect the illuminating comments in Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare*. He brushed aside the rules of classical criticism and went to the plays themselves for an evaluation of the dramatist. He revived the interest of English readers in the Elizabethan drama and drew their attention to the power of Milton. His comprehensive understanding, together with his sane judgment, has earned for him Professor Saintsbury's appropriate designation of "the very Bible of criticism."

Another critic of the period who was partly responsible for the revival of interest in the older English literature was William Hazlitt. He began his literary career as a parliamentary reporter for the London *Morning Chronicle*. In this paper and others appeared his criticisms of the dramas and actors of the day. These he later collected in *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* and *View of the English Stage*. From the stage he turned to English literature in general, of which he had a wide but rather superficial knowledge. His criticism was often marred by his prejudices and tendency to repetition. He had a passion for literature of every period, as

the *Lectures on the English Poets, Lectures on the English Comic Writers,* and *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* testify. Hazlitt's method was largely impressionistic. He was given to "picking out the beautiful passages that I like." Hence his remarks about particular scenes or parts of a work are excellent. He aroused an enthusiasm for literature in his readers and revealed to them unknown sources of pleasure. What greater service to the general reading public can a critic give? For this alone he deserves his place among the great English critics.

The founder of the comparative method of modern criticism was Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve. He considered the critic the secretary of the public, studying and interpreting literature with the aim of definitely passing judgment upon the merits and defects of a book. He also pointed out the necessity for the critic to determine the object of the author. Thus he judged works not by classical rules but by their success in accomplishing what the writer purposed. During 1850-1852 his Monday chats on literature, the *Causeries du Lundi,* appeared in the *Constitutionnel* and the *Moniteur.* At this period he had already gained a reputation by his articles on the French literature of the sixteenth century. Sainte-Beuve defined a classic as "an author who has enriched the human mind;—who

has discovered some unequivocal moral truth or again has seized upon some eternal passion in that heart where all seemed to be known and explored;—who has spoken to all in a style of his own.'' This was the creed by which he tested French literature and explained its qualities to his readers.

But more important even than Sainte-Beuve's critical estimates was his method. He began his articles with a few general remarks about the work under discussion; then he gave a biographical sketch of the author; after this he examined particular qualities with specific quotations, and finally he concluded his criticism with a comparative placing of the work. The reader was thus enabled to obtain a comprehensive view of the author and to understand the relationship of his work to his life and to the literature of his period.

The English advocate of comparative criticism, Matthew Arnold, formulated two general standards concerning greatness of action and the grand style. ''All depends on subject'' was his guiding principle. His *Essays in Criticism* are more than a discussion of a single work or author. Arnold considered the conditions of society and the circumstances under which the works were produced. Furthermore, he could give reasons for his statements, so that he aroused confidence in his judgment. Arnold preached the

broad outlook of culture to his generation in such books as *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma.* The Greek ideal, for which he fought so strenuously, has generally been adopted not only through his own repetition of the need for culture and his attacks upon the Philistines of materialism, but also through the efforts of the converts he made. Arnold was consistent in his criticism, since he distrusted personal taste and adhered to standards. Whatever literature he touched, he made more comprehensible, for he was an inspired and inspiring critic. Perhaps to-day his doctrine of "sweetness and light" is not so vital as it was to his generation; yet his thunderings against lack of thought in the majority still convey some wholesome messages.

The main figures of English literary criticism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century were Leslie Stephen, John Addington Symonds, and Walter Pater. Stephen's studies of English thought and literature in the eighteenth century and his *Hours in a Library* reveal his excellent judgment and pleasing humor. Of Symonds's *The Renaissance in Italy,* Professor Saintsbury, the eminent authority upon the history of criticism, wrote, "There is no better historical treatment of a foreign literature in English."

Pater belonged to the impressionistic school and derived from Anatole France some of his

views. He stressed the pleasure of sensation. The duty of the critic is to feel the charm of literature and then to interpret it to others. His studies, the most notable of which are *Renaissance* and *Appreciations,* apply these principles to various authors. Pater was a very careful writer, paying much attention to the beauty of expression. His ideas and style appealed strongly to the younger critics of the early years of the twentieth century.

The only American critic of prominence during the nineteenth century was James Russell Lowell. As editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *North American Review* he came to be highly regarded for his scholarship, his Yankee shrewdness, and his natural diplomacy. Recognizing this diplomatic gift, the President of the United States appointed him Minister to Spain and later transferred him to England, where he did much to bring about a better understanding between the two English-speaking peoples. He had a sincere appreciation for literature, but had a tendency to allow his likes and dislikes to control his judgment. A recent writer has stated that his *Among My Books* and *My Study Windows* have nothing very important to say about the writers discussed. These essays in the *Atlantic* did, however, inform American readers concerning the merits of Dante, Chaucer, Wordsworth, and other great names in literature.

The period following the death of Sainte-Beuve was marked in French criticism by the conflict between the judicial school and the impressionistic school. Hippolyte Taine declared himself a pupil of Sainte-Beuve, whose theories he carried to an extreme in applying the scientific method to criticism, particularly concerning the nationality and the environment of the writer. He defended his ideas in *The Ideal in Art* and in the preface to his *History of English Literature.*

Ferdinand Brunetière took up the cudgels in defense of the objective school of criticism in an attack upon Anatole France's *La Vie Littéraire.* Brunetière claimed that the whole object of criticism was to classify and judge, while France proclaimed that "the good critic is he who narrates the adventures of his own mind among the masterpieces." Brunetière had a vast amount of learning and a command of argument. France, however, had a charm of style and a force of satire, which inevitably found the weak points in his opponent's arguments. At least France scored a telling point when he indicated the importance of the personal equation in all criticism. He was ably seconded in his reply to Brunetière by Jules Lemaître's *Contemporaries.*

The disciples of Sainte-Beuve in Italy, Francesco de Sanctis and Giosue Carducci, did much to increase the reputation of Italian writers.

They studied the texts carefully, investigated the backgrounds of the authors, and interpreted the beauties of Italian literature. The dean of contemporary Italian criticism is Benedetto Croce, who has developed a philosophy of criticism based upon the idea that "art is vision or intuition." *The Essence of the Esthetic* explains his theory of art, while numerous essays have resulted from his studies of the classics of European literature and from his investigation of modern Italian literature. Unfortunately, Croce's philosophizing and somewhat involved style make him difficult to read.

The most widely read of modern critics was George Brandes, Professor in the University of Copenhagen—from which he was expelled for his radical views. For a time he lived in Germany, but was later recalled. The range of Brandes's interests was extensive. He wrote on such a diverse company as Ibsen, Nietzsche, Chateaubriand, Byron, Heine, Hugo, Shakespeare, Cæsar, Voltaire, and Michelangelo. The work, however, which established his reputation as the outstanding continental critic of the last fifty years is *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*. Of it he said, "I go down to the foundations of real life, and show how the emotions which find their expression in literature arise in the human heart." The *Main Currents* is a classic of comparative criticism.

The critics of the twentieth century have been largely recruited from the ranks of the college professors and journalists. The creative writers have also examined the works of their contemporaries. Professor Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* and scholarly essays entitle him to be considered the dean of English critics. William Archer, Edmund Gosse, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Ernest Rhys, and Edward Garnett have introduced authors like Ibsen and Turgenev to the English public and have increased the appreciation for English literature by their illuminating studies. A younger group of critics, among whom are Rebecca West, Frank Swinnerton, Hugh Walpole, and Virginia Woolf, has pointed out the more recent developments in literature.

In America criticism has become a recognized profession, for the weekly reviews and literary magazines offer unlimited opportunities for discussion of the merits of both old and new writers. The demand for popular lectures on literature has further encouraged the critics. Among the professors who have guided the taste of the reading public are such well-known names as Brander Matthews, Richard Burton, Bliss Perry, Carl Van Doren, Stuart Sherman, and William Lyon Phelps. Perhaps the latter has done more than any other lecturer to arouse a general interest in books by his enthusiastic comments. The journalists and editors seem to vie with

the professors in explaining the classics and in recommending new authors. Max Eastman's *Enjoyment of Poetry,* the books of Walter Prichard Eaton and Edwin Bjorkman on the drama, Paul Elmer More's *Shelburne Essays,* and the studies of Van Wyck Brooks, John Macy, and Robert Cortes Holliday have aided many American readers to obtain a better understanding of literature.

In the advance guard of criticism in America are H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan. As co-editors of *The Smart Set* and *The American Mercury,* they have been looking for undiscovered talent for the last fifteen years. They have defended Dreiser, Lewis, and O'Neill as representatives of realism against the attacks of detractors. They have always been outspoken and often clever in their remarks about literature, the stage, and life, because they are apostles of free discussion. Never are they happier than when they have an opportunity to attack some long accepted convention. The title of Mencken's series of essays is indicative of this attitude. He calls them *Prejudices.* In one essay he says, "The only thing I respect is intellectual honesty, of which, of course, intellectual courage is a necessary part." Nathan has told us that his purpose has merely been to express his personal opinions regarding the drama. His main contention is that drama is artificial life and should be

judged from that point of view and not as real life. Despite their distrust of the masses and their disdain of the erudite, Mencken and Nathan have assumed qualities of both groups. In a radical manner they are earnestly endeavoring to promote learning and spread culture. Someone has very aptly referred to them as "highbrows in disguise."

The European critics have also tended to reevaluate the classics and to regard sympathetically the experiments of new writers. They have likewise given some attention to literatures other than their own, with the purpose of introducing foreign authors to their readers. In France the traditions of Sainte-Beuve, Brunetière, and Anatole France have been carried on by Emile Faguet, Gustave Lanson, Marcel Schwab, Rémy de Gourmont, Paul Souday, André Chevrillon, Emile Legouis, and numerous others. French literature has always been rich in the value and brilliance of its critical essays. Russian critics have recently been making studies of their famous writers from Puskin and Gogol to the symbolists. Unfortunately, very few of these essays have been translated into other languages, but the reader may gain some idea of their work from Prince Mirsky's *Contemporary Russian Literature*. The four outstanding names in contemporary Spanish criticism are Miguel de Unamuno, Azorín, Menéndez y Pelayo, and

Ramón Menéndez Pidal. These men have discussed a variety of subjects in a scholarly but entertaining manner. The students of Spanish literature have praised them for their ability to state their ideas clearly and to give life to the most technical of literary and philosophical studies.

From a consideration of the critical essay in contemporary literature we may draw the conclusion that the tendency is to arouse a more widespread and intelligent interest in books. The critics desire to stimulate thought concerning the problems of civilization presented by representative authors. They bend every effort toward making literature in all its phases as attractive as possible. This aim they accomplish by new studies of the lives of authors and of the relationship of famous books to life. The critical essay is no longer written primarily for the school, but for the general reader who wishes a guide to "not only the best, but all good that has been known and thought and written in the world."

## XII

### THE ORATION

ORATIONS are usually dull reading, because the intonation of the orator's voice and the expressiveness of his gestures are lacking. Often we go to hear a person speak, regardless of his subject, for we are taken with his personality. He has acquired a reputation for eloquence, such as that of William Jennings Bryan, or is noted for his humorous sallies. The orator appeals to the emotions by his illustrations and stories, and to the reason by his arguments. He enforces his points by effective diction. The attitude of the audience also affects the quality of his oration. When he feels that his hearers are sympathetic, he has a comparatively easy task to persuade them to accept his views. But he prefers a hostile audience to an indifferent one, for the latter resists all his efforts. Oratory has been defined as "public discourse of the argumentative type, in which truth of personal import and issue is presented and enforced."

Another reason that orations are infrequently read is that they are occasional. They are given for a definite purpose or celebration, such as the commemoration of Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, or Independence Day. Political

orations are especially ephemeral because the issues which were vital fifty years ago have only a historical interest for posterity. Sometimes, however, the orator has been so inspired by the spirit of his subject that he has voiced ideas of permanent value. The passion of the moment has not obscured essential truths. Instead of adapting himself exclusively to his period and his audience, the orator has appealed to humanity in general. He has interpreted the ideas of his day and has explained the spirit of a people. These orations may be read with much enjoyment.

As the orator is presenting his ideas by means of the spoken word, he must take pains to be clear. When a reader does not understand a paragraph, he may reread it. But the spoken word is gone as soon as it has been uttered. Hence to enforce his points the orator repeats them in other words. At times this habit makes the reading of orations tiresome.

Probably orations will be read even less in the future than they have been in the past, since the radio has brought the spoken word to so many millions. Yet a few orations of the past deserve a permanent place in literature on account of their admirable construction or eloquence of diction.

In Athens oratory was a principal subject of study, for any citizen might have to plead his

cause before the jury. Moreover, every citizen had the privilege of stating his views in the public assembly. If he were unable to compose a speech, he hired a professional rhetorician to write it for him.

The Greek critics of the Alexandrian period choose ten orators of the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. as outstanding. Three of these, Lysias, Isocrates, and Demosthenes, have been known to generations of students of Greek, because their orations have been read in college courses. Lysias and Isocrates devoted most of their time to writing speeches for clients, but they spoke occasionally before the assembly. Lysias's oration against Eratosthenes denounces the tyrant for the death of the orator's brother. Isocrates praised the Athenians in his *Panegyricus* and urged them to make a stand against the Persians.

The greatest orator of antiquity was Demosthenes, whose first success was in the five orations delivered against his guardians. He had inherited an estate from his father, but had lost it through the unscrupulousness of these guardians. To earn a living he became an advocate in the courts of Athens. By constant practise and by studying the orations of Pericles as reported by Thucydides he soon gained eminence. The story of how he placed pebbles in his mouth and spoke on the seashore above

the roar of the waves has been used again and again to illustrate the quality of perseverance.

Demosthenes looked with apprehension at the rising Macedonian monarchy. He said that Philip planned to conquer Athens by policy or force. In eleven orations delivered between 352 B. C. and 340 B. C. he endeavored to arouse the Athenians to a sense of their danger. He warned them against the proposals of the peace party led by the orator Æschines. At last the successes of Philip brought panic to the citizens, and acting upon the advice of Demosthenes they made an alliance with Thebes. Unfortunately, the allies were defeated at Chæronea in 338, but two years afterward Greece was temporarily saved by the death of Philip.

After the death of Philip, Ctesiphon proposed that Demosthenes be given a golden crown for his services to the state. Æschines opposed the measure as unconstitutional. The oration *On the Crown* is Demosthenes's brilliant account of his position and public life in Athens. After an apology for speaking about himself he attacks with sharp sarcasm his opponent. The whole oration is a fervid appeal to the ideals of honor and of patriotism. Shortly after this great victory Demosthenes was found guilty of accepting a bribe and went into exile. When the Greeks were finally conquered, he poisoned himself to

escape falling into the hands of the victorious Macedonians.

The power of Demosthenes to sway his audience was due to his eloquence. His style has all the vigor of his intense personality. He was essentially an emotional speaker, moving his audience by every appeal known to the art of the orator. At times he gained his effect by subtle suggestion. He never hesitated to use oaths or colloquial expressions, provided that they made his orations more vivid. He realized that he could accomplish his purpose most effectively by arousing his audience to a sense of their danger or of their power.

By translating into Latin the orations of Demosthenes and the other Greek orators, Cicero prepared himself for a career as an orator and statesman. His aim was to acquire a command of language, for he said, "What is there in the world more extraordinary than eloquence, whether we consider the admiration of its hearers, the reliance of those who stand in need of assistance, or the good will it procures from those whom it defends." In three books, *Concerning the Orator, Brutus,* and *The Orator,* he discussed the training of a speaker and drew the portrait of an ideal orator, taking examples from Greek and Roman oratory.

The four orations *Against Catiline* and the fourteen *Philippics* against Mark Antony are his

most distinguished speeches, altho several others, such as those delivered at the prosecution of Verres, the defense of Archias, and the advocacy of the Manilian Law, reach a high level of excellence. Cicero was the defender of the Roman Republic from attacks from within as Demosthenes was the defender of Athens from foreign conquest. He warned the senate and the Roman people that their liberties and lives were endangered. With admirable lucidity and logical arguments he builds up his case until the overwhelming weight of evidence crushes his opponent.

Generations of schoolboys have studied Cicero for his finished style and his command of the Latin language. He gained his effect by the use of contrast, balance, and rhythm of phrase. His dramatic power is the result of his method of direct address. There must have been a sensation in the Roman Senate on that morning when Cicero turned toward the man who was planning to murder him and cried, "How far wilt thou, O Catiline! abuse our patience?" By a series of rhetorical questions or ironical references he secured the attention of his audience. The very characteristics which made him an effective orator cause him at times to be tedious to the modern reader. He had a tendency to diffuseness and redundancy. Yet we forget his faults, for we are profoundly impressed with his power

of characterization and the force of his eloquence.

The lectures and debates of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages and the scholars of the Renaissance were largely expositions of theology. Many of them show the absurdity of arguing for the mere sake of arguing, such as the debate concerning how many angels can stand on the point of a needle. Their only value is their revelation of the type of learning of the day.

Two bishops, Bossuet and Fénelon, in the age of Louis XIV gained renown for their sermons and orations. Much of their work was controversial and explanatory of theological doctrines. Bossuet was also noted for his funeral orations. He was sincere and generally fair in his discourses, altho he was capable of severe denunciation when the occasion demanded. His controversy with Fénelon resulted in the condemnation of the latter's doctrine by the Pope. Fénelon's *Télémaque* describes in excellent prose a state of society which became a pattern for some of the social reformers of the next century.

As the eighteenth century was a period of political and social revolutions, oratory flourished in parliaments and pulpits. The English statesmen were discussing the attitude of the American colonies and siding for or against leniency. The champion of America was Edmund Burke, who entered Parliament in 1766. He had

been born and educated in Dublin, but had decided to remain in England after several years of traveling throughout the country. During his long term in the House of Commons, Burke always took the side of the oppressed. He pointed out the cruelty of the English policy in India and denounced the African slave trade as well as England's tyranny toward her colonies in America. Burke's speech *On Conciliation with America* taught that "representation was the sovereign remedy for every evil." The *Impeachment of Warren Hastings* is Burke's masterpiece of invective. In spite of their brilliance, Burke's speeches failed to gain support, because they were too intellectual and philosophical. Burke was fond of theorizing and adhered closely to the classical style. His resounding periods and rhetorical flourishes astound the reader, but they also tire him.

At the same time in America Patrick Henry was making much more effective pleas for American liberty. The simplicity of his style and the directness of his statements aroused his hearers to action. His declaration, "I am not a Virginian, but an American," was the keynote of the first Continental Congress. In 1775 he delivered before the Second Revolutionary Convention of Virginia the short but powerful *"Give me Liberty or Give me Death"* Speech.

The various political, social, and religious

movements during the last hundred years have been the stimuli for a great deal of oratory. The majority of the speeches have been forgotten because of their temporary nature. To read them with any degree of understanding would demand a study of the conditions or theories which produced them. Some of them were so prejudiced in tone that their ardent partizanship has seriously marred their eloquence. Others have handled the subject convincingly but are extremely dull reading. Of all the modern orators we shall, therefore, discuss only three, whom we may consider spokesmen of three aspects of Americanism. Daniel Webster was the outstanding American statesman of the first half of the nineteenth century. An authority upon constitutional law, he gave his energies to the defense and preservation of the spirit of the constitution. His *Reply to Hayne,* delivered in 1830, insured national unity for another thirty years. He continually worked for compromise, regardless of his own political fate. In fact, he ruined his political career by his *Seventh of March Speech* in 1850, by which he aroused the antagonism of his New England constituents because he supported the Fugitive Slave Law. Whittier's poem, "Ichabod," expressed the general opinion of surprize and disappointment at Webster's attitude among the anti-slavery men.

In his addresses at the two hundredth anni-

versary of the landing of the Pilgrims, at the laying of the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument, and at the death of Adams and Jefferson, Webster expounded the ideals of the founders of the American nation. Both for their Americanism and for their eloquence they should be read by every American youth; they are lessons in citizenship. Webster was a master in the older school of oratory. By logical development and the use of striking phrases he gained his effect.

The method of Abraham Lincoln was almost directly opposite to that of the rhetorical orators. His speeches are characterized by a noble simplicity and calmness. He said: "I always assume that my audiences are in many things wiser than I am, and I say the most sensible thing I can to them. I never found that they did not understand me." Lincoln's common sense enabled him to adapt himself perfectly to any situation. His directness, his sympathy and understanding, his keen judgment impressed all who came into contact with him. The *Gettysburg Address* and the *Second Inaugural Address* are classics of American oratory. In a few hundred words Lincoln revealed the spirit of each occasion and inspired his hearers to noble thoughts. His earlier speeches in the courts of Illinois and his debates with Douglas had been his preparation for the presidential addresses. The idea that

he was a born orator is a most erroneous one. By experience and hard study he acquired his fine literary style.

To many Theodore Roosevelt is the representative orator of twentieth-century America. His numerous interests, his tireless energy, his indomitable will, and his firm determination to accomplish what he believed to be right have exalted him to this position of prominence. His doctrines of the strenuous life and a square deal have gained him many admirers. Roosevelt spoke with definiteness and fearlessness. He always went straight to the point and stated concretely his ideas. The force of his personality and his abundant vitality gave added weight to what he said. The reader will perhaps find his speeches somewhat egotistical, with too much waving of the big stick, but cannot fail to admire his vigor.

At the present day the old-fashioned school of rhetorical oratory has given place to the lecture and informal talk. The speaker presents his views without ornament and often appears to be conversing with his hearers rather than endeavoring to impress them with carefully-planned climaxes. Such speeches seem less artificial and make easier reading, but they seldom rise to the level attained by the great orators of the past.

## XIII

### FORERUNNERS OF THE NOVEL

The most popular form of literature is prose narrative. From earliest childhood we are eager to hear a story which will appeal to our imagination or satisfy our curiosity. Cabell once said that "The business of the novelist is to tell untruths that will be diverting." In any case we demand from the novelist that he offer us entertainment, whether he be romanticist or realist. We wish to escape from our actual surroundings or to have their significance interpreted to us through the means of a vivid presentation of the actions of interesting people. The novel gives us an extensive view of life, for we learn about the conditions of society in former times, about places we could never visit, and about persons we might never know. Our most valuable friends may be the creations of some great writer of fiction. They come to be more real to us than the persons with whom we live. A story can be found to appeal to every human emotion. If we are sufficiently imaginative, we may even identify ourselves with the hero or heroine and live vicariously in his experience. Furthermore, in fiction we find incorporated the ideas of the time,

so that we can reconstruct the society of the age in which the book was written.

In its strictly technical form the novel did not appear until the eighteenth century. There were, however, a long list of forerunners, from the Greek romances of the early centuries of the Christian era to the tales in the eighteenth-century periodicals. These were composed of a succession of episodes more or less loosely connected. The Greek pastoral romance, *Daphnis and Chloe,* is a tale of innocent love among shepherds. Its author, Longus, presents an idealized picture of country life, which never existed in Greece or any other place. It is somewhat conventional, with its lost heirs, separated lovers, miraculous escapes from pirates, and final happy reunion. Longus makes his young people so attractive, however, that we sympathize with them in their difficulties and rejoice with them in their joys, even tho we are highly amused at their simplicity. Longus's work influenced greatly the pastoral romances of the sixteenth century, but it is far more entertaining for the modern reader than those artificial imitations.

Two Latin romances, the *Satyricon* of Petronius and the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, are filled with diverting adventures of a rather coarse nature. They were sources for episodes in the *Decameron, Don Quixote,* and *Gil Blas.*

Petronius shows us the absurd affectation of the newly rich and the dissoluteness of Roman society in the first century of the Empire. The *Golden Ass* relates the experiences of a commercial traveler who was turned into an ass and then owned by representatives of various classes of society. Finally he regained his human form. In this collection of tales the most charming is that of Cupid and Psyche.

The medieval prose romances recount the noble deeds of national heroes, the trials of devoted lovers, or the pious acts of devout Christians. The Irish sagas concerning Cuchulain and Ossian, and the Welsh Mabinogion are fine examples of the first group. The chief characteristics of the Irish sagas are the glorification of the individual hero, the importance of women, and the emphasis placed upon the supernatural. Cuchulain is the Irish Achilles, victorious over all enemies and loved by all women. Many of the tales, such as the *Sorrows of Deirdre,* impress the reader with their pathos, while others abound in typically Irish humor. The authors of the recent Gaelic revival have gone to these ancient legends for their themes and some of their most attractive characters. The Mabinogion tales, taken from the *Red Book of Hergest,* a fourteenth century manuscript, by Lady Charlotte Guest, deal with events during the Celtic

period, the Roman administration of Britain, and the days of King Arthur.

*Aucassin and Nicolette,* a French romance of the twelfth century, is the story of a slave girl, who turns out to be a daughter of the king of Carthage. She is loved by the heir of Count Garin de Beaucaire, who endeavors to separate the lovers. The story is told partly in verse and partly in prose, a form called *cante-fable.* The beauty of the language and the graceful style entitle this romance to be ranked as the masterpiece of the love romances.

The religious romances were written primarily to teach lessons of service to the church or to relate the miracles of the saints. In *Our Lady's Tumbler* a humble juggler who has entered a monastery serves the Virgin Mary by tumbling before her statue, because that is his only talent. Other stories tell about miraculous escapes and wonderful cures by those who had devoted their lives to the church. A large body of medieval literature concerned the legends of the saints, for religion and especially the worship of the Virgin Mary dominated the life of the time.

With the revival of learning came the imitations of the earlier Greek and Latin romances. These stories were more realistic in subject, coarser in tone, and more artificial in style than the originals. The most celebrated of them

is Boccaccio's *Decameron.* By nature Boccaccio was a student, but his father wished him to be a merchant. At thirteen he was put to work in a counting-house, later he was apprenticed to a merchant in Naples, and finally he was permitted to study law. But none of these pursuits was congenial to him. He participated in the gay life of the city, and in accordance with the custom of the day fell in love with the wife of the Count d'Aquino. As Fiammetta she was the inspiration for his love poetry and his *Fiammetta,* "the first novel of psychology ever written in Europe." After Fiammetta and his father had been swept away by the Black Death of 1348, Boccaccio was about to enter a monastery when he was dissuaded by Petrarch and encouraged to study the classics. The result of this study was his book concerning famous men and his *Genealogy of the Gods.* In 1373 he started a course of lectures at Florence upon Dante's *Divine Comedy,* but died before he had finished his comments on the "Inferno."

The *Decameron* is composed of one hundred stories supposed to be told by ten persons on ten days while residing at a country villa to escape the plague at Florence. The book opens with a realistic description of the scenes resulting from the terror of the Florentines at the pestilence which was sweeping over the city. The fugitives tell the stories merely to distract their minds.

Hence the tales are unmoral and frequently rough in their humor. Boccaccio's natural gift for direct narration, good sense of structure, and easy style make his retelling of the material drawn from classical and popular sources unfailingly entertaining. Trickery and exposure of hypocrisy play a great part in furnishing this entertainment. From the pages of the *Decameron* authors of all the European literatures have taken material. Its influence upon English literature from the time of Chaucer has been especially marked.

While Boccaccio was collecting the stories for his *Decameron,* a French physician was composing from the various medieval encyclopedias and travel-books a guide for pilgrims to Jerusalem and merchants to Asia Minor. He claimed to be Sir John Mandeville and to have actually seen all the marvelous things he describes. His *Travels* is largely fiction, but is so well written that the incidents seem plausible. Many of them are ridiculous to the modern reader, but the book is worthy of attention because its great popularity, especially in the English version, indicates the literary taste of the age. Besides the stories, it contains practical advice about roads, stopping-places, and means for determining the value of merchandise offered for sale by the wily Easterners.

In 1485 William Caxton printed another im-

portant compilation from French sources, so that "noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry." This book was Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur,* a coherent account of the deeds of the knights of the Round Table. Caxton's characterization of the *Morte d'Arthur* indicates its scope: "For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown." The simple, direct prose of Malory presents Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Tristan, Guinevere, Elaine, Isolde, and all the minor characters as human beings swayed by their passions and struggling to attain their aims. To Malory are indebted Tennyson, Arnold, Morris, Swinburne, and Robinson for the incidents and characters of some of their finest poetry.

The pastoral romance was brought into European literature in the fifteenth century by the Italian prose-poem *Arcadia* by Sannazarro. The simplicity of the classical pastorals was replaced by artificiality, for in the literature of this period courtiers retired intentionally to the country to amuse themselves. In the pages of Sannazarro they assumed an innocence they did not possess. Sannazarro was imitated by Montemayor in Spain and by Sidney and Lyly in

England. One of the episodes in Montemayor's *Diana Enamorada* was the source of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

Sir Philip Sidney wrote his *Arcadia* to entertain his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. It is an idealistic pastoral by the first gentleman of the age. Princely shepherds spend their days untroubled by the trials of court and enjoy the pleasures of chivalry and romantic love. The extreme artificiality of the style as well as the elaborateness of the plot bores the modern reader.

This style, based upon carefully constructed sentences, balanced phrases, antitheses, alliteration, puns, and the extravagant use of metaphor and simile, is called Euphuism from the two books, *Euphues* and *Euphues and his England* by John Lyly. One sentence from Lyly's work will illustrate its main characteristics of style: "I have shrined thee in my heart as a trusty friend; I will shun thee henceforth as a trothless foe." The influence of this style upon English prose was minimized by the ridicule of Shakespeare and other great writers, and by the severe censure of the critics. Lyly wrote his pastorals to teach "virtuous and gentle discipline." Like Sidney and Spenser he was trying to restore the passing age of chivalry. His characters lack vitality, for they are too much concerned with the discussions of their emotions and the

witty expression of their ideas. In *Euphues* the dandies and flappers of the day discourse on the nature of love. At times the reader is reminded of the modern psychoanalytical novel.

No one to-day would have the patience to read extensively these pastoral romances of the Renaissance. They seem hopelessly confused in plot and interminable in length. Yet single episodes in them are entertaining in spite of the faults of style. They are books to be dipped into here and there for an hour's reading. Their chief importance lies in their position in the development of fiction.

Another group of fifteenth and sixteenth century authors burlesqued the romances of chivalry. They were realists attacking the follies of their contemporaries. Two of them, Rabelais and Cervantes, wrote masterpieces in this form of literature. Unlike their predecessors in the art of fiction, they had the ability to create character as well as to tell a good story. The names of their heroes have been incorporated into our language as the adjectives, Gargantuan and Quixotic, to designate persons having similar characteristics.

François Rabelais was educated in a monastery and became a monk and priest. Later he studied medicine and science. He was not content with the life of a monk, but never severed his connection with the church. After some

years of wandering in France and Italy he spent the last two years of his life as curé of Meudon. His observations on these travels and the results of his wide reading in the literature of the time found expression in *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel.* Underlying the humorous and farcical accounts of the adventures of the giant, Gargantua, and his son, some of which were taken from Lucian's *A True Story,* is the lash of Rabelais's venomous satire. Altho his hatred of the hypocrisy and intolerance of the learned professions is concealed under a mass of exaggerated and nonsensical incidents, it is clearly the motive of the work.

Rabelais was an individualist and an optimist. He believed that each person should have the opportunity of self-development without restraint. Furthermore, he was convinced of the natural goodness of man. Even his devils are boon companions and merry fellows. He advocated a life of jollity and freedom. He is often coarse and obscene, but portrays life vigorously and frankly.

The progress of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* is frequently interrupted by digressions, in which Rabelais indulges in subtle irony at the expense of his adversaries. His style rushes along like a torrent, with synonyms falling over one another in groups of three or more. Rabelais's rule seems to have been never to use one word when

you can just as easily employ several. Even his enormous vocabulary was not sufficient; so he invented words and formed new compounds. Since his characters are giants, perhaps it is appropriate for them to thunder, "Let no other cark nor care be harboured within the sacrosanctified domicile of your celestial brain." Such language, moreover, aids to produce the comic effect which is this author's chief claim to fame.

Six years before the death of Rabelais, was born the Spanish author who was to make the romances of chivalry ridiculous. Cervantes served as a soldier in Italy, was wounded at the battle of Lepanto, and was a prisoner in Algiers for five years. After his return to Spain he held several public offices, but apparently was negligent, for he was imprisoned for shortages in his accounts. Hence these positions did little to increase the meager income he received from his literary work. His unfinished *Galatea* is a pastoral romance of inferior quality, and his score of plays have been forgotten.

In 1605 Cervantes published the first part of *Don Quixote*. At once it became popular and has continued for three hundred years to be the only book of Spanish literature to be universally read. During his imprisonment Cervantes had reread the romances and had noted as never before their extravagance. He tells us that he wrote his

book "to diminish the authority and importance that books of chivalry have in the world and among the vulgar" and "to expose to the contempt they deserve the extravagant and silly tales of chivalry." His method was burlesque. Don Quixote is an idealist seeking to revive knight-errantry in a realistic and selfish world. He mistakes a windmill for a giant and a country wench for his lady. He is rational upon all subjects except chivalry, but even in his maddest actions he is noble. His gentle disposition and kindly ways have endeared him to all readers. Don Quixote's squire, Sancho Panza, is a materialist, more interested in obtaining his next meal than in aiding distressed maidens. His common sense is contrasted with the Don's romanticism. The Lady Dulcinea is the conventional and haughty beauty of courtly love.

Most critics consider the second part of *Don Quixote*, published in 1615, superior in its human appeal to the first part. The concluding scene of the death of the beloved Don Quixote is a masterpiece of restraint and pathos. The twelve *Exemplary Tales* are further evidence of Cervantes's marvelous invention, universal humor, and remarkable characterization.

The works of Rabelais and Cervantes turned the attention of the reader from adventure for its own sake to an interest in particular characters. The early forerunners of the novel were

concerned primarily with the telling of the story, while the immediate precursors, following the example of Cervantes, made some effort to depict characters. Madeleine de Scudéry chose historical characters for her *Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie,* interminable romances of some six thousand pages each, but she was really portraying the persons of the court of Louis XIV under a thin disguise. The events in her books reflected those of her own times, and the conversations were typical of French aristocratic society rather than of the ancient world. In the description of "the country of tenderness" she used the device of allegory, a favorite method with seventeenth-century writers.

The most popular allegory in literature is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Translated into seventy-five languages and dialects, it has been read in every portion of the world. In *Grace Abounding* Bunyan told the story of his sinful days as a poor tinker, of his conversion, of his persistent study of the Bible, of his preaching in the streets of Bedford, and of his imprisonment in Bedford jail for having "devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church" and for refusing to discontinue his preaching. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a dream-allegory of the trials and temptations of the Christian as he journeys through the world to the eternal city. It made clear to the common

people the Puritan doctrine of salvation through grace. Bunyan's detailed descriptions of places and vivid characterization of types, such as Faithful, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and Talkative, have gained him readers who have had no interest in his purpose. His simple, straightforward, and somewhat colloquial style, learned from the King James version of the Bible, is adequately fitted to his subject.

This plain style was also suitable for the realistic narratives of Daniel Defoe, whose training as a journalist enabled him to see in the adventures of Alexander Selkirk on an uninhabited island and in the careers of criminals and prostitutes possibilities for entertaining and profitable stories. *Robinson Crusoe* shows how an ordinary Englishman would act under exceptional circumstances. The tale is made convincing by the use of minute details, so that the reader is never left in doubt as to the why and wherefore of events. This fact accounts for its popularity with young readers. Furthermore, the story exalts the virtues of patience, honesty, and industry as characteristic of the typical Englishman. Defoe was shrewd enough not to overstress the moral, but he knew its appeal to his middle-class audience. *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* deal with low life in London, while the piracies of *Captain Singleton* take us to Africa as Defoe imagined it. The *Memories of a Cavalier* and *A*

*Journal of a Plague Year* describe historical events as clearly as tho Defoe had participated in them. When one is reading Defoe, it is hard to believe that his works are fiction and not accounts of actual happenings.

Altho Defoe recounted the adventures of criminals, he did not make them heroes. They paid the penalty of hanging or transportation. The French author, Lesage, on the other hand, made a rogue his hero. He obtained the idea of writing *Gil Blas* from the picaresque romances of Spanish literature, which he had studied at the suggestion of his patron, the Abbé de Lyonne. Gil Blas's varied and numerous adventures brought him almost every type of experience among all classes of society. Lesage drew his material largely from life in Paris in the first half of the eighteenth century, for he was a keen observer of his surroundings. He has little time or inclination for reflections, but he does satirize the pompous types of his time by revealing them through the eyes of his clever rogue. The successors of Lesage in the realm of realistic fiction were Smollett, who translated *Gil Blas* into English, and Fielding.

Besides the books discussed in this chapter there were many other narratives which prepared the way for the novel, but they are interesting only to the specialist in literature. They are all similar in nature in so far as they are

composed of rambling adventures. Until the middle of the eighteenth century no writer of fiction produced a book with a central idea, a coherent progression of plot, and a definite conclusion. This was the accomplishment of Samuel Richardson, the father of the modern novel.

## XIV

### THE ENGLISH NOVEL

About the year 1740 Samuel Richardson was asked to write a manual of model letters for those unaccustomed to writing familiar correspondence. As he was preparing this work, it occurred to him to connect the letters about a central theme. So was born the English novel. From his boyhood days Richardson had written and read love-letters for servant-girls. Furthermore, he was fonder of the society of the ladies of his own middle class than he was of that of his business associates. Thus this successful and elderly printer had learned the secrets of the feminine heart. He had the remarkable ability of looking at life through the eyes of his sentimental heroines, so that he appears to have entered into their very souls, understanding their thoughts and experiencing their emotions.

His first novel, *Pamela,* is the story of a virtuous serving-maid, who resists the advances of her employer and is rewarded by marriage to him. The letters become boring because they deal with various aspects of the same subject—the trials of a servant-girl. The character of Pamela is, however, finely drawn, even tho she is somewhat too sentimentally good. The success of

*Pamela* caused Richardson to write another series of letters about the betrayal of a woman of the middle class by a licentious youth. *Clarissa,* like its predecessor, is a sentimental novel, but its heroine is a real woman, whose sorrows impress us. In this novel Richardson sustained the interest, in spite of the book's astounding length, by his dramatic climaxes. In his third novel, *Sir Charles Grandison,* he endeavored to portray the perfect gentleman as a model of virtue and manners for his middle-class readers. As he knew neither the aristocratic class nor the elements of masculine psychology, the work was a failure.

Richardson's moralizing, his sentimentalism, his limited view of life, and his interminability do much to obscure the excellence of his character drawing; nevertheless, his novels did appeal to the taste of his age, so that on the Continent he was ranked with Shakespeare. The influence of *Clarissa* upon the sentimental novel of France and Germany was enormous.

When Henry Fielding read *Pamela,* he was highly amused, for his experience as playwright and justice of the peace had taught him that virtue was seldom rewarded in real life. He wrote *Joseph Andrews* to ridicule the manner and method of Richardson. Joseph, the virtuous brother of Pamela, is dismissed by his mistress, Lady Booby, because he fled from her atten-

tions. Joseph's subsequent adventures in the company of Parson Adams are so vividly and humorously told that they have overshadowed the original intention of burlesque.

In *Tom Jones* Fielding portrays the life of an ordinary young man who yields to temptations but proves himself true and generous at heart. Altho Tom is weak, he is never mean or proud. The heroine, Sophia, is a true woman and not a sentimental saint. She forgives Tom, since she realizes that he is thoughtless rather than vicious. The novel is a masterpiece in the construction of the plot. Fielding has here woven together three great plots of literature: the missing heir, the separated lovers, and the prodigal son. The reader of *Tom Jones* and of *Amelia* will find a comprehensive picture of eighteenth-century society in England. Fielding's gentle satire and wise comments on social life remind us of his Victorian successor, Thackeray, who wrote: "Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a man." Fielding is a great realist with an understanding of human nature and an unsurpassed sense of humor.

Fielding's humor is subtle and ironic, while that of his contemporary, Tobias Smollett, is rough and coarse. Smollett had served as a surgeon in the navy during the siege of Carthagena

and had seen the terrible conditions and brutalities of a sailor's life. These experiences he utilized for *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle,* novels of events rather than of character. His heroes are rogues, whose coarseness disgusts the modern reader. Like Zola, he is an apostle of ugliness and a disciple of naturalism. His own misfortunes had caused him to believe that "we are all playthings of fortune." *Humphrey Clinker,* the story of a journey made by a Welsh family through England and Scotland, is somewhat less harsh. Unlike Fielding, Smollett was indifferent to plot. His novels remind one of the adventure stories of Defoe, for he was interested in events for their own sake. His tendency to present unusual characters and to indulge in slapstick humor influenced Dickens to some extent. Smollett's service to English fiction was the introduction of the element of travel. He is the father of the sea novel and of the dialect novel.

A reaction to the realism of Fielding and the naturalism of Smollett is the sentimentalism of Lawrence Sterne. When the hero of *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* was arrested because he lacked a passport, he called for a volume of *Hamlet* and identified himself as Yorick, the king's jester.

Indeed, the author was a "fellow of infinite jest." His wit and brilliancy caused him to be in demand at every fashionable party in London.

After the publication of the first part of *Tristram Shandy* he had engagements months in advance. Sterne's books are a jumble of more or less unrelated incidents about the Shandy family and the fictitious tour of Europe. He was a past-master in the art of suggestion, leaving the outcome of his unfinished episodes to the reader's imagination. He enjoyed fooling the reader by skipping a chapter or omitting the essential fact of an incident. Underlying his fooling is a little mild satire of human frailties and a touching pathos. Sterne was a poseur concerned with his own impulsive reactions and sensibility. His philosophy was one of pleasure and flirtation. He has left us a gallery of inimitable portraits, among which are such diversified characters as My Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, La Fleur, and the Parisian Grisset.

Another book published in the spirit of jest was the *Castle of Otranto,* which Horace Walpole pretended was an ancient story he had discovered. It is a typical Gothic romance, with its underground passages, wild storms, pursued heroine, mysterious happenings, and narrow escapes. Walpole most effectively accomplished his purpose of surprizing his readers and terrifying them. Of the many successors of the *Castle of Otranto,* Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho,* containing all the paraphernalia of

the terror novel, is the most hair-raising. In the Gothic romance is the germ of the mystery novel.

Even Dr. Johnson contributed to the list of eighteenth-century novels. *Rasselas* is a philosophical romance about the escape of a prince and his sister from the Happy Valley to the outer world under the guidance of the philosopher Imlac in their search for happiness. Johnson attacks the current optimism with the conclusion that "human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed." *Rasselas* is dull because of its moral teachings and learned discussions between the prince and the philosopher.

To save its author from a debtor's prison, Dr. Johnson sold for sixty pounds a book whose popularity exceeds not only that of his own *Rasselas* but also that of any other eighteenth-century novel. This book was Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield,* a story of the simple family life of a country clergyman. Dr. Primrose "is drawn as ready to teach and ready to obey; as simple in affluence, and majestic in adversity." The inherent goodness and faith of the father and the pathos of the story appealed to all readers throughout Europe. Goethe commended Goldsmith for his sympathetic understanding of human nature and recommended *The Vicar of Wakefield* as one of the best novels ever written.

A country parsonage, similar in some respects

to Dr. Primrose's cottage, was the home of Jane Austen. She wrote for her own amusement about the ordinary life of the people she knew, and cared little whether her works were published or not. Consequently her books were not well known until after her death. Five of her six novels, *Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Persuasion, Mansfield Park,* and *Emma,* deal with the customs and daily duties of households typical of hundreds in the England of the early nineteenth century. Jane Austen ridiculed the sensationalism and the extravagance of the Gothic romance, which she satirized in *Northanger Abbey.* Her careful workmanship made her novels perfect of their kind. With her contemporary, Sir Walter Scott, who recognized her ability, we may exclaim, "What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"

In 1814 Scott published *Waverley,* the first of his historical romances known as the Waverley novels. Altho Scott manipulated historical details to serve his purpose of dramatic presentation, most boys have gained a clearer idea of the Crusades, Medieval France, Elizabethan England, and the Scotland of the Stuart pretenders from *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman, Quentin Durward, Kenilworth, The Heart of Midlothian,* and *The Bride of Lammermoor,* than from any course in history. Scott recreated the spirit of the past. The atmosphere and the set-

ting of his novels are integral parts of their plots, for the background harmonizes with the action and intensifies it. Scott's most appealing characters are those of his novels of Scotch life. His lords and ladies are too haughty and too cold to be attractive. We enjoy his historical novels for their vast scenes of thrilling action, but turn to his Scotch novels for a delineation of life and real persons like Jeanie Deans.

The popularity of Scott among the English novelists has been surpassed only by that of Charles Dickens. This popularity is due to his farcical humor, his striking exaggerations, his detailed descriptions, his melodramatic scenes, and especially his queer but vivid characters. Dickens's method of character-drawing was to exaggerate some dominant trait until the character became a caricature. Sam Weller, Micawber, Pickwick, Uriah Heep, Bill Sykes, Pecksniff, Oliver Twist, Little Nell, Squeers, and numerous others became as well known to the Victorians as their next-door neighbors. If the readers of twentieth-century America have not made the acquaintance of these people, they have missed one of the lasting joys of literature.

Dickens wrote his novels to arouse the British public to a sense of the dreadful conditions among the poor. In the preface to *Martin Chuzzlewit* he stated his purpose thus: "In all my writings I hope I have taken every possible

opportunity of showing the want of sanitary improvements in the neglected dwellings of the poor." From his own experience he knew the hardships of the poor. When he was eleven years old, he was pasting labels on blacking-bottles and associating with the downtrodden of the London slums. Later he gained further knowledge of vice and brutality as a clerk in a lawyer's office and as a newspaper reporter. Until the publication of *Pickwick Papers* in 1836, his life was a struggle against poverty. *David Copperfield,* considered generally his masterpiece, is based upon these early sufferings and the peculiarities of Dickens's father, who was the original for Micawber.

Altho the majority of the novels of Dickens expose social abuses, one, *A Tale of Two Cities,* enunciates his faith in the natural goodness of man. Sydney Carton sacrifices his life so that Lucie Manette, whom he hopelessly loves, may find happiness with Charles Darnay. This is the most carefully constructed of Dickens's works. The descriptions of the French Revolution are better than the descriptions in some of the other novels because the details do not obscure the general picture. No reader will ever forget Madame Defarge knitting at the door of her wine-shop.

The chief faults of Dickens are his sentimentality and his melodramatic tendencies. His

villains are very black, and his heroines are paragons of goodness and sweetness. So tense are his scenes that his followers could hardly wait for the next part of one of his absorbing stories. Dickens is a novelist of the heart, appealing to the deepest emotions of humanity, and as long as men and women are swayed by their emotions, he will be read. According to the testimony of booksellers and librarians, *David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver Twist,* and *A Tale of Two Cities* are still called for more than any other novels of their time. The sympathy of Dickens for suffering humanity and his understanding of human nature have kept his fame alive. Even should his novels come in time to be forgotten, his Christmas stories will still have admirers.

Thackeray, on the other hand, appeals to the intellect rather than to the heart. As a realist and critic of society he is a literary descendant of Fielding. He hated the affectation and hypocrisy of aristocratic life as he had observed it. A sentence from a letter to his mother reveals his aim in writing his best-known novel, *Vanity Fair*: "What I want is to make a set of people living without God in the world—greedy, pompous men, perfectly self-satisfied for the most part, and at ease about their superior virtue." The heroine of this society is the unscrupulous adventuress, Becky Sharp. The heroes are

Arthur Pendennis and Clive Newcome in *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*. Thackeray's attitude is that of a moralist, availing himself of every opportunity to emphasize the lesson of his stories by discussing with his readers in a conversational tone the significance of the actions of his characters.

Thackeray's extensive knowledge of the eighteenth century served him in writing *Henry Esmond* and its sequel, *The Virginians*. The people of these historical novels were just as real to him as those of Victorian society. He became so interested in the characters he created that he is said to have wept after he finished describing the death of Colonel Newcome. For its restraint and true feeling this description is one of the great scenes of literature. Another scene even more indicative of his command of situation is the discovery of Lord Steyne in Becky's apartment by her husband, Rawdon Crawley. In depicting such scenes Thackeray is unsurpassed.

A follower of Thackeray is Anthony Trollope, who chronicled the doings of society in a cathedral town of mid-Victorian England. He was the most indefatigable of workers, writing two or three novels at the same time. The result was some eighty novels, of which *The Warden, Framley Parsonage, Barchester Towers,* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* still give pleasure by their accurate pictures of a quiet English town.

Trollope had no illusions concerning the merit of his work. He made no claim to the title of artist, but regarded himself only as a conscientious workman, portraying a variety of characters in a limited world; a world, however, in which the struggles and jealousies, tho trivial, were as potent as in the London of Thackeray.

Charlotte Brontë also was a realist of the school of Thackeray with a tendency toward romanticism. She and her sister Emily sought in the writing of fiction relief from the routine and dulness of their teaching. What they could not experience they would imagine. Emily's *Wuthering Heights* is a stormy romance of tortured souls; Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* shows the faithful devotion of a humble governess. The atmosphere of both novels is grim and suggestive of the Gothic romance.

The biographer of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, wrote in *Cranford* a delightful story of village life. The gossip and flutter of feminine society about trifles she has humorously reproduced. Her novels of social reform based upon the lives of the poor in the industrial city of Manchester have lost the appeal they once had.

The supreme moralist among the Victorian novelists is Mary Ann Evans, who wrote under the name of George Eliot. A psychological analysis of individuals struggling with the prob-

lems of life is the chief characteristic of her work. Her characters develop according to their surroundings and inherent traits. If they transgress the moral law, they inevitably pay the penalty for their actions. If they do a deed of unselfishness, their lives become brighter and their characters stronger. As suffering played a large part in lives of the country folk, who were the subjects of George Eliot's novels, there is usually a note of sadness in her work. At times the tragedy, as in the story of Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss,* is very depressing. The theme of the degeneration of one group of characters contrasted with the regeneration of another group occurs again and again. *Silas Marner, Adam Bede,* and *Romola* teach the same lesson with a change in the problems and the setting. Probably that is the reason George Eliot is read less than any other Victorian novelist. She is too typically Victorian in her moralizing. Even her fine characterization is subordinated to her desire to convey a lesson.

George Meredith also was a psychologist, but he was concerned with types rather than with individuals. His women are emancipated, for he scorned the sentimental heroine. He suggests that the ideal marriage is one in which the husband and wife are intellectual companions. His analysis of the thought of man reveals that most of us are egoists. In fact, his greatest

novel is entitled *The Egoist*. Like George Eliot, he strikes a note of tragedy. Both *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *Beauchamp's Career* have a sad conclusion. Meredith's condensed style and philosophical tendency have limited his audience, because the average reader finds him difficult to follow.

Altho Thomas Hardy's style is simpler than Meredith's, his novels have a scarcely wider appeal. Hardy is a pessimist, placing his characters in the grip of a relentless fate. They are victims of an environment like Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*. Nature is hostile, and man is unkind. When *Far from the Madding Crowd* was published anonymously in the *Cornhill Magazine*, many readers thought that George Eliot must be the author, because of the tragic tone. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* contain the fullest expression of Hardy's pessimisitic philosophy. Altho he lived until 1928, he stopped writing novels at the beginning of the twentieth century.

While the majority of Victorian novelists were discussing the problems of life and subjecting society to an intensive analysis with the purpose of social reform, Robert Louis Stevenson was writing glorious romances of stirring adventures merely to entertain. *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* have thrilled men as well as boys with their narrow escapes and rapid action. As I

write, Long John Silver and Jim Hawkins are being presented to the radio audience in a program of retold tales. For Stevenson the story is the essential part of the novel, even in a psychological study like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. No one since Scott has drawn such excellent pictures of Scotch life as those in *The Master of Ballantrae* and *David Balfour*.

Several minor Victorian novelists have been remembered for one or two books. Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia* and *Westward Ho!;* Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Harold;* and Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* are historical novels dealing respectively with the conflict between paganism and Christianity in Alexandria, Elizabethan voyages of discovery, the licentious society of the Roman Empire, the Norman conquest, and the spirit of the early Renaissance. Richard Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* owes its reputation to its romantic episodes and its unexcelled descriptions of the scenery of the Exmoor section of England. The Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, wrote a number of political novels from his experiences with party government. *Coningsby* is perhaps more readable than the others.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century a native of Poland, Captain Korzeniowski, was beginning to write—in English—novels based upon his cruises as a sea captain. Joseph

Conrad was his pen-name, and his object was to make his readers see "life on the ocean wave" as he had observed it. He interpreted the effect of the sea, and of strange, out-of-the-way places upon the moods of men and women. His women are somewhat unnatural, because they are undemonstrative, suffering in silence. His men however, are virile and impressive in their conflicts with their environments and fellow men.

Of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* Conrad wrote "It is the book by which, not as a novelist, perhaps, but as an artist striving for the utmost sincerity of expression, I am willing to stand or fall." For the majority of his readers, *Lord Jim* or *Victory* surpasses *The Nigger* in story-power and in characterization. All his novels bear witness to his care in composition. Every word counts, for he endeavored to gain "a perfect blending of form and substance." His novels are a unique combination of romanticism and realism. He transports his reader to an unfrequented portion of the world and makes him at home there.

Of living English novelists, particularly those under forty, it is difficult to write, as they are still making their reputations. They are experimenting with new forms of fiction and dealing with rather startling subjects under the influence of modern psychology. At present there seems to be a tendency to overdo the psycho

analytic method. In a recent novel the hero spends most of his thought on an introspective investigation of the workings of his mind and emotions. The novel of plot and the novel of character development have yielded to the novel of the laboratory.

Some of our contemporary novelists, however, are carrying on the older tradition, altho they try at times new forms. H. G. Wells uses the novel to present his theories and ideas of what the world might be if nations would forget their selfish aims and pool their resources for the benefit of mankind. By temperament and training Wells is a scientist investigating the social, political, and religious life of our time in an endeavor to discover ways of improving conditions. He is ever advocating change for what he considers the better. His novels fall into several groups. The imaginative romances picture the world of the future as a mechanical world. The most ambitious of these, according to Wells, is *The Sleeper Awakes.* The sociological novels criticize contemporary stupidity. *Tono Bungay, The History of Mr. Polly,* and *The New Machiavelli* are typical of this group and are considered by some critics Wells's best work. His more recent works may be classed as novels of ideas. *The World of William Clissold* is the most comprehensive of these, as it contains discussions on all the modern theories. Besides

the novels, Wells has written several books explaining his views. The essence of his scheme is stated in *The Open Conspiracy,* published in 1928. Some years ago Anatole France called Wells "the greatest intellectual force in the English-speaking world."

While Wells is preaching the gospel of change, Arnold Bennett is showing the effect of changing conditions upon people. His novels of the potteries district of England are studies of provincial life in a changing environment. *The Old Wives' Tale* is one of the three great English novels of the twentieth century. The other two are Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* and Maugham's *Of Human Bondage.* Even in his most superficial books, such as *Lillian,* Bennett is interested in the influence of surroundings upon character. Many critics feel that he has wasted his talents in writing merely entertaining novels, when he had nothing particular to say. But one should not expect an *Old Wives' Tale* every year. In whatever he writes, serious or flippant, Bennett is essentially a realist and always entertaining.

The literary descendant of Thackeray in contemporary fiction is John Galsworthy. As Thackeray satirized the upper middle class of Victorian society, so Galsworthy points out the faults of the same class to-day. Soames Forsyte, the central character of the *Forsyte Saga,* is an embodiment of the sense of possession and the

sense of family solidarity. He fails to realize that he cannot buy whatever he wants. Through his obtuseness he loses the woman he loves and does not understand the attitude of people whose ideas are different from his own. Galsworthy is coldly intellectual, writing with restraint and precision. He presents problems from the point of view of a spectator of the modern scene, but offers no solutions to them.

Somerset Maugham is also a careful workman. He produced only four novels in seventeen years, but three of these, *Of Human Bondage, The Moon and Sixpence,* and *The Painted Veil,* are works of high merit. They are studies of the sensitive and selfish temperament. Maugham is harsh and stern, scorning especially the parasitic type of woman. He is cruel to his characters, even tho he sympathizes with them in their sufferings. His statement that "the writer is more concerned to know than to judge" suggests his theory of his craft.

Another novelist who has expressed his views on the art of fiction is Hugh Walpole. In a lecture given in 1925 he stated his creed: "I believe that in the novel there must be first creation of character and secondly a narrative interest." He might have added that the narrative interest results from conflicts of ideas. In most of his novels the characters struggle against some impending obstacle. In *Fortitude* the obstacle is

heredity; in *The Duchess of Wrexe* and *Wintersmoon,* the social traditions; in *The Green Mirror,* the jealousy of a mother; in *The Captives,* religious prejudice. The aspect of contemporary life which impresses Walpole is the clash between Victorian emotions and modern ideas. His ability to describe situations with an appropriate phrase makes his contrasts most striking.

The experimental school of modern fiction does not endorse Walpole's creed. These writers subordinate creation of character and narrative interest to a dissection of mental states. Their characters spend more time in introspection than in action. George Moore, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and some dozen others have startled and often confused unsuspecting readers. The attitude of many toward this school is that of a youth who asked after reading a typical specimen, "What is it all about?"

## XV

## THE AMERICAN NOVEL

During the revolutionary period several writers imitated the English novels of the eighteenth century, but the first original American novelist was James Fenimore Cooper. He became a novelist by chance, for he wrote his first book to prove a remark to his wife that he could write a better novel than one he was reading. The result scarcely justified his contention. In 1821, however, he succeeded with *The Spy,* a story of Washington's retreat from New York through Westchester.

Cooper had spent his boyhood in central New York, which was then still a wilderness inhabited by Indians and pioneers. In the *Leather-Stocking Tales,* composed of *The Deerslayer, The Last of the Mohicans, The Pathfinder, The Pioneers,* and *The Prairie,* he caught the mystery of the forest as no other writer ever has. Many boys have followed with breathless interest the adventures of Natty Bumppo and have learned to admire the hardy pioneers. Their knowledge of Indians is also largely derived from the *Leather-Stocking Tales.*

Cooper also knew the sea, since he had been nine years in the navy after his expulsion from

Yale. His sea stories, beginning with *The Pilot,* have been praised for their "consummate understanding" by no less an authority than Joseph Conrad. The descriptions of fights on the sea, of wrecks, and of storms have seldom been equaled.

Cooper's style reflects his impulsive and quarrelsome nature. He was careless and indifferent to the laws of composition. He wrote as the words came to him, with no thought of revision. The majority of his characters are wooden or too noble, especially his weak and silly women. He had no sense of humor and took himself too seriously, suing his detractors. Yet in spite of all his faults he was a great story-teller, who will be read as long as forest and sea call to American boyhood.

Altho Cooper at times was given to moralizing, he concerned himself little with the religious life of the American settlers. The annalist of Puritanism is Nathaniel Hawthorne. His home was Salem, famous for its trials of witches and its stern morality. This atmosphere is the background for *The Scarlet Letter,* "the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in America," according to Henry James. The theme of this novel is that the sinner cannot escape the effect of sin upon the soul, no matter what atonement he may make. As the scarlet letter embroidered upon Hester Prynne's dress when she stands on the scaffold is the symbol of her

sin, so little Pearl in the cottage on the outskirts of the town is a continual reminder of her fall. The grim pathos of Hester's story insured for the novel a success surprizing both to Hawthorne and to his publishers, who thought it too tragic for a general appeal.

*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun* are also studies of disturbed conscience. The scene of the first is a haunted house in Salem, frequented by ghosts under the spell of a curse. *The Marble Faun* was suggested to Hawthorne during a residence of two years in Italy. As a setting for this story dealing with the effect of a crime upon different types of characters, Hawthorne described historic places and commented upon Italian sculpture. It is significant, however, that the most striking character of the book is the Puritan, Hilda. Hawthorne had discovered the romance in New England Puritanism and never departed far from its influence, regardless of the setting of his novels.

The novel which aroused the moral indignation of the North to the abuses of slavery was also a product of New England. Mrs. Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a piece of propaganda for the *National Era,* an anti-slavery periodical. It is highly sentimental and melodramatic, but it has touched the emotions of millions through the stage version and the recent moving picture. Mrs. Stowe's novels of New

England life have long been forgotten. The world knows her only as the creator of little Eva, Topsy, Eliza, and Uncle Tom.

Of the large number of American novelists writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens), William Dean Howells, and Henry James alone have a permanent place in world literature. Mark Twain's understanding of the various phases of American character and his wide knowledge of other nationalities, gained from his extensive travels, fitted him to be the interpeter of American life. He was an individualist, disregarding conventions. No one ever knew what he might do or say. His spirit of fun was so infectious that his audiences tried to find humor even in his serious novels, such as *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Joan of Arc*.

Mark Twain's humor is typically American. It consists in exaggerating a fault or in unduly emphasizing an unimportant detail. He realized, however, that the truest humor is based on discriminating observation and serious reflection. Thus underneath his most extravagant fooling is a touch of satire at current stupidity. He could be as indignant and as bitter as Swift when he was aroused. He also had a wonderful vocabulary of invectives acquired during his days on the Mississippi River steamboats. Mrs.

Clemens frequently exerted a restraining influence, if we may believe Mark's stories.

He learned to write in newspaper offices in Nevada and California. *Innocents Abroad,* his first book, is composed of his letters to his paper during his first trip through Europe. *A Tramp Abroad* and *Following the Equator* are records of other trips. All these books prove that he was a shrewd traveler, missing little of the characteristic life of the places he visited.

Upon the experiences of his youth Mark Twain drew for *Roughing It, Life on the Mississippi,* and his stories of American boyhood in the seventies, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn.* These books are more than accounts of humorous adventures; they are records of the development of civilization in the central portion of the United States during the decades after the Civil War. Mark Twain is the chronicler and incidentally the satirist of American democracy.

The extent of his popularity is best illustrated by one of the famous anecdotes about him. One evening at a Players' Club dinner Brander Matthews suddenly remembered that it was Mark Twain's birthday. With several other diners he composed a letter of congratulation. When they came to address the envelop, no one could tell just where Mark was at that moment. So they sent the letter to "Mark Twain, God knows where." Some weeks later Professor

Matthews received from Italy a message of two words: "He did."

The faults of America which Mark Twain censured, his friend Howells was willing to overlook. Howells felt that "the more smiling aspects of life . . . are the more American." These aspects he presented in his novels, closing his eyes to the other characteristics of American life. His world was a world of books, for he hated publicity and feared the passions of life. Consequently his works lack the vital power of other realistic novels. *A Modern Instance* and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* introduced into American fiction the commonplace American family and the successful business man. Howells was always a careful artist, and his mastery of style received the praise of a much greater novelist, Henry James.

When he was twenty-six years old, Henry James went to live in England, where the cultural tone was more congenial to his intellectual tastes. This action caused his compatriots to consider him a snob and prevented his novels from gaining more than a limited American audience. Furthermore, in *Daisy Miller, The American, An International Episode,* and *The Portrait of a Lady* he stressed the ignorance and the vulgarity of the rich American in Europe. He had no sympathy for his characters, subjecting them to a severe analysis. When he

carried his method to the extreme, his novels resembled his brother's text-books in psychology.

The later novels of Henry James are so complex in construction and so involved that all but the small group of his ardent admirers find them most difficult to read. The reader has to create the characters for himself from the various hints which the author gives him or which the circumstances reveal. *The Golden Bowl* is typical of this period, in which James had fully developed his brilliant style and objective method.

A disciple of Henry James in artistic finish and in psychological study of character is Edith Wharton. Like him, she has made her home in Europe, but has never lost touch with American life. Her characters are members of the New York aristocracy she knows so well. Whether her scene is New York of the forties or of the present day, she brings out the irony in their lives. Her people are the victims of circumstances or of family traditions. Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth,* Undine Spragg in *The Custom of the Country,* Countess Olenska in *The Age of Innocence,* Lizzie Hazeldean in *Old New York,* and Kate Clephane in *The Mother's Recompense,* all suffer because they have disregarded the moral or social code. Recently the problem of divorce has claimed Mrs. Wharton's attention. She observes American society in a detached manner and reports the results of her observation.

Her most artistic book is *Ethan Frome,* the finest study of New England character since Hawthorne.

Dorothy Canfield has also presented the problems of the modern woman. Her women, however, do not belong to the aristocratic class, but to the hard-working middle class. *The Brimming Cup, The Home-Maker,* and *Her Son's Wife* deal with women who have solved their problems and accepted their responsibilities.

The West is represented in contemporary fiction by Booth Tarkington, Theodore Dreiser, Willa Cather, and a number of younger writers. Tarkington once said: "I had no real success until I struck Indiana subjects." The first of the Indiana series was *The Gentleman from Indiana,* a romantic story of a young man who found success by working hard at home after he had sought it in a wider environment. Tarkington wrote about the same time a charming romance of the eighteenth century, *Monsieur Beaucaire.* The books of his later period are more realistic but are never sordid. He has always had the optimism of the romantic temperament. His portraits of boyhood and youth in *The Flirt, Penrod,* and *Seventeen* have recalled to many the experiences of their earlier days. These young people take themselves so very seriously that trivial mishaps seem to them irreparable tragedies. Even when we sympathize with them, as

we do in reading *Alice Adams,* we cannot help but see the humorous side of their difficulties. *The Turmoil, The Magnificent Ambersons,* and *The Midlander* show the changes which material progress is bringing to the Middle West. In these books, as well as in *The World Does Move,* Tarkington suggests a contrast between the peaceful nineties and the Jazz Age, indicating that progress destroys idealism and brings ugliness. Altho Tarkington is often superficial, he is always entertaining in his portrayal of the lighter side of American life.

Theodore Dreiser, on the other hand, finds little in modern America to cause him to smile. The title of his best-known book, *An American Tragedy,* indicates his point of view. From his observations as a collector for an instalment house and as a newspaper man, he has formed the philosophy that "life was intended to sting and hurt." The whole of existence seems aimless to him. Yet he continually wonders at the strange and unexpected coincidences. His first novel, *Sister Carrie,* is his best work—probably because a friend cut out some 40,000 words. Dreiser cannot resist the tendency to multiply irrelevant details. He leaves nothing to the imagination of his readers. The publishers accepted *Sister Carrie* in 1900 with some misgiving, as the heroine does not suffer for her misdoing but becomes a success upon the stage. Dreiser's strong

point is the drawing of characters whose lives are dominated by the struggle of conflicting desires. The desire for power in the business world is the subject of *The Financier* and *The Titan.* In *An American Tragedy* Dreiser thoroughly investigates the circumstances which produced a murderer out of a sensitive and lonely youth and brings an indictment against the processes of our legal system. This novel is too long, and far from pleasant, but makes a profound impression, for Dreiser is sincere in his study of the problems of twentieth-century America.

Willa Cather is more concerned with the past than with the present. Her novels contain recollections of her childhood and youth spent in Nebraska, where she was a neighbor of Norwegian and Bohemian immigrants. She has recorded the efforts and aims of these pioneers of the West in such novels as *The Song of the Lark* and *My Antonia.* Another section of the West which has attracted her is that once occupied by the cliff-dwellers. The excellent descriptions of this section, incorporated in *The Professor's House* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop,* have greatly increased Miss Cather's reputation as an artist. The simplicity and beauty of her style and her sympathetic understanding of the artistic and scholarly temperaments have assured her a place in the first rank of our novelists.

The American novelist of to-day who has given the most careful attention to style is a romanticist from Virginia. Finding modern America entirely inadequate, James Branch Cabell has created Poictesme, an imaginary country of medieval times. In this remarkable land Manuel, the Redeemer; Jurgen, the Pawnbroker; and numerous ladies of surpassing beauty discover that the romantic ideals of youth are illusions. Cabell has told us that his purpose is "to write perfectly of beautiful happenings." Life is a series of comedies to be accepted "with a smile of toleration." By means of a mixture of mythology, allegory, irony, and wit he expounds his theories in an entertaining manner. Before *Jurgen* was censored, Cabell's name was practically unknown to the average reader. His audience is still a comparatively small one, because the average reader cares more for the story than for the style of a novel. Cabell's mystifications and elaborate phraseology irritate many readers. *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck,* a story of Southern aristocracy, is an excellent introduction to Cabell, as it is less fantastic.

A neighbor of Cabell, who has treated the society of the South from a realistic point of view, is Ellen Glasgow. Her penetrating studies of the new South, especially *The Romantic Comedians* and *They Stooped to Folly,* have aroused the antagonism of the adherents of

Southern chivalry. Miss Glasgow has no illusions about the South. She has watched the changes about her old home in Richmond and has interpreted their influences. The leisure of the plantation has yielded to bustle of business. Those who have refused to recognize the change and have clung to the old traditions are deluding themselves.

The novelists discussed in the preceding pages have been chosen as representative of contemporary American fiction because their best work has qualities of permanence. Others, like Sinclair Lewis, have written best sellers but have placed too much emphasis on a passing phase of American life or have tried too hard to appeal to the popular taste. They have definitely written for an audience demanding a certain type of fiction from them. Some have been directly accused of considering their pockets rather than their art. At any rate the American novel is assuming an individuality and has a bright outlook. The Pulitzer Prize, the publishers' prizes, and the book clubs offer encouragement to young writers to produce characteristically American novels. Whether the awards have gone to distinguished work is for posterity to decide. Undoubtedly many popular novels will be forgotten fifty years hence, while a comparatively unknown book may be held to be most expressive of the spirit of the age.